

**A CRITICAL REALIST APPROACH TO
LITERACY ACQUISITION AND DEVELOPMENT,
WITH SPECIFIC APPLICATION TO TEACHER
TRAINING AND SUPPORT IN PRIMARY
EDUCATION IN KWAZULU-NATAL**

by

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A critical realist approach to literacy acquisition and
development, with specific application to teacher
training and support in primary education in
KwaZulu-Natal

by

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Thesis in compliance with the requirements for the Doctor's Degree
in Technology: Language Practice in the Department of Media,
Language and Communication, Durban University of Technology.

I declare that this thesis is my own work and has not been submitted for any
other degree or examination at any other institution.

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ABSTRACT

In adopting a critical realist approach, this study offers a view of the complex social and contextual factors impacting on literacy acquisition and development in primary education, which is thought to be its main contribution to the field. The study's focus was on reading because reading is a fundamental part of literacy acquisition and development in primary education. Its purpose was to establish the state of current literacy teaching and learning practices in formal education so that, ultimately, recommendations could be made for teacher training and support. In the changing face of education in post-apartheid South Africa, provision has been made by the government to democratise education, and, in particular allow all students equity of access to key competences such as literacy. However, there are signs that all is not well at the level of implementation, for example, the low learner pass rate. In particular, teachers do not appear to be coping with the new dispensation, and are generally demoralised and demotivated. It must be stressed that the issue of literacy acquisition and development is complex and multi-layered, and not just a simple question of applying linguistic knowledge or skills. While literacy is a key competence for schooling and a key life skill, education is an essential variable in literacy acquisition and development. However, there are indications that the South African educational system is failing to deliver quality education to its learners. It has been estimated that illiteracy is costing the government as much as R550 billion a year. The fact remains that the main responsibility for teaching literacy rests with schools. Currently there is a literacy crisis in South Africa. This means that large numbers of children are not acquiring the high level skills in reading and writing that will enable them to take part in the new knowledge economy.

The general aim of this project was to investigate the process of literacy acquisition and development in primary schools. The investigation focused specifically on how learners acquire literacy, and the involvement of teaching training and support for educators. It was anticipated that the investigation would identify gaps in the acquisition and development of literacy, as well as

provide recommendations for teacher training and support: the findings might then feed specialist knowledge on the current state of literacy acquisition in formal education into the area of teacher training as to address the problem of lack of preparedness of teachers to deal with literacy acquisition. The project involved an investigation of literacy teaching and learning practices in three different types of public school in the EtheKwini Region, comprising ex-Model C, semi-urban and rural schools. The scope of the study was confined to three primary schools in KwaZulu Natal. The selected research sites were Joel¹ Primary School (urban) in the Pinetown area, Milo Primary School (semi-urban) in the Mariannhill area, and John Primary School (rural) in the Ndwedwe District. No attempt was made to generalise on the acquisition of language and development, and the provision of teacher training and support at these selected primary schools with reference to schools in the rest of South Africa. However, it is thought that the findings might well be relevant to some schools to enable them to cope and understand the role and function of language acquisition and development.

The social factors which negatively impact on literacy acquisition and development were found to include features of the local social context, security for literacy resources and other physical challenges. Factors impacting negatively on teacher performance were inadequate teacher training, the impact of teacher unions, and the effects of poverty and HIV/AIDS. Some of the clearly intertwined challenges experienced at the Intermediate Phase education level include the problems of insufficient teaching staff numbers and insufficient numbers of competent and trained staff; lack of sufficient support for African language learners; large class sizes; lack of resources; and lack of quality leadership in schools. These challenges are the shaky ground upon which we build education for some of our learners, especially those in rural and poor areas.

¹ The schools were given fictitious names for reasons of confidentiality.

PREFACE

DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

I, Rookumani Govender, declare that this thesis is my own work and all the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references. The only form in which this work has previously been published is in the journal articles and conference papers listed below.

PRIOR PAPERS AND PUBLICATIONS ARISING FROM THIS STUDY

Govender, R. (2009a). *Literacy crisis: a realist approach to the acquisition and development of literacy in primary education in KwaZulu-Natal*. In Proceedings of the *FAD Conference 2009*, Durban University of Technology, 3-5 June 2009.

Govender, R. (2009b). *South African schools' multi-lingual and multi-cultural literacy problems*. In Proceedings of the *Seventh International Conference on the Book*, Edinburgh, Scotland, 16-18 October 2009).

Govender, R. (2009c). *The blame game experienced in the Intermediate Phase with regards to literacy*. Paper presented at the Environment and Language Education Trust, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban, 30 October 2009.

Govender, R. (2010a). *Literacy problems in the Intermediate Phase in South African schools*. In Proceedings of the *2010 Global Language Convention*, Melbourne, Australia, 8-11 April 2010.

Govender, R. (2010b). Literacy crisis experienced in South African schools: a realist approach. *The International Journal of the Book*, September 2010, 7(4):1-8, September.

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ACRONYMS

LAD	-	Literacy Acquisition and Development
LiEP	-	Language in Education Policy
LAC	-	Learning Area Committee
LLC	-	Literacy language and Communication
DoE	-	Department of Education
SMT	-	Senior Management Team
SADTU	-	South African Democratic Teachers Union
SGB	-	School Governing Body
PIRLS	-	Progress in Reading Literacy Study
SKAV	-	Skills, knowledge, Attitude and Values
OBE	-	Outcomes Based Education
NCS	-	National Curriculum Statement

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CHAPTER ONE

RATIONALE AND INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

“Good education policies wasted” (Jones, 2011).

1.1 Introduction

Chapter One first looks at the context of the research, that is how literacy acquisition and development are faring in the changing landscape of education in post-liberation South Africa. Taylor (2010) asserts that the legacy of apartheid has created a negative environment for literacy acquisition and development (LAD) in South African schools. This study’s focus is on reading because reading is a fundamental part of literacy acquisition and development in primary education. The chapter then outlines five factors impacting on literacy acquisition and development: the implementation of the Language in Education Policy (LiEP) (1997), the actual performance of learners in the classroom, the teacher’s experience in the classroom, the role of the School Governing Body (SGB) and, lastly, teacher training and support (sub-factors leading off from these, and which were part of the findings of the study, are dealt with in Chapter Five). Next, the rationale for using a critical realist approach is provided. It is suggested that this focus on the social mechanisms affecting literacy acquisition and development might make an original contribution to the field. After that, the aim and purpose of the research, scope of the study are given, followed by a summary of chapters in the thesis. The chapter concludes by summing up the impact and potential value of the study.

1.2 Context of the research

This study is concerned with the field of literacy acquisition and development, more specifically, in the area of teacher training in primary education. Its aim is to establish current literacy teaching and learning practices in formal education so that, ultimately, recommendations can be made for teacher training and support. In the changing face of education in post-apartheid South Africa, provision has been made by the government to democratise education, and, in

particular allow all students equity of access to key competences such as literacy. However, there are signs that all is not well at the level of implementation, for example, the low learner pass rate and teachers leaving the profession (Adams & Waghid, 2005; Naidoo, 2009). In particular, teachers do not appear to be coping with the new dispensation, and there are indications that they are generally demoralised and demotivated. Between 2005 and 2008 more than 24 750 teachers left the profession (Maluleka, 2010). It must be stressed that the issue of literacy acquisition and development is complex and multi-layered, and not just a simple question of applying linguistic knowledge or skills. While literacy is a key competence for schooling and a key life skill (Joseph, 2007), education is an essential variable in literacy acquisition and development. Research carried out by Serrao (2010) indicates a deepening crisis in South Africa's schooling system that is correlated to the low literacy levels achieved by all levels of our education system. South Africa's learners fared poorly in both international and national tests for maths and literacy. The South African educational system does not appear to be delivering quality education to its learners. According to Nkomo (2010) illiteracy is costing the government R550 billion a year. The fact remains that the main responsibility for teaching literacy rests with schools.

Currently there are indications of a literacy crisis in South Africa (Sisulu, 2010). Pretorius (2002) states that the reading situation in South Africa represents a national educational crisis, given the relationship between the reading ability and learners' academic performance. This means that large numbers of children are not acquiring the high level skills in reading and writing that will enable them to take part in the new knowledge economy. Many children are not even getting access to the basic skills of decoding needed for schooling. Reading is not just for school, it is for life. According to Serrao (2010) the Grade 3 Systemic Evaluation in 2003 showed that the literacy average was 53%, the 2005 Grade 6 results showed a 35% score for language, and in 2006, the Progress in Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) indicated that South African Grade 4 learners scores were the lowest of those taking part in the study (See Figure 2.4). Hence this study will focus on reading because reading is one of the fundamental building blocks of learning. Becoming a skilled and adaptable

reader enhances the chances of success at school and beyond. Reading is an active process of bringing one's own knowledge of culture, content and context into an encounter with that of the writer in an active process of meaning making. But this is not enough. Readers need to learn how to ask questions and to examine the underlying assumptions, values and positions of texts in order to understand the interests they serve (Stein & Janks, 2004).



Figure 1.1 Children being encouraged to read (Picture: Sizwe Ndingane)

Reading in all its various forms is vital to our becoming better informed, to having a better understanding of ourselves and others, and to our development as thoughtful, constructive contributors to a democratic and cohesive society. Moreover, encouraging children to read about things that interest them (see Figure 1.1) will not only help them learn to read efficiently, but will also enable them to develop an interest in writing. Research shows some of the serious consequences of our literacy crisis (Sisulu, 2010):

- 3 million South Africa adults are completely illiterate - unable to read the instructions on a medicine bottle or to complete a job application form without assistance.
- There are millions more people (estimates range from 5 to 8 million) who are functionally illiterate - unable to function adequately in the modern world due to under-developed reading and writing skills.
- 10 million South African are “alliterate” (i.e. able to read but not habitual readers). This is one of the outcomes of not having a culture of reading.

South Africa’s education system has changed considerably since 1994. A new democratic governance system, language policy (14 July 1997, Government Notice No. 383, Vol.17797) and outcomes-based education (OBE) curriculum were introduced into our schools in 1997. The new Education Policy and the outcomes-based initiative (Curriculum 2005) made provision for literacy acquisition and development in the learning areas of Language, Literacy and Communication. These three changes affected how schools related to literacy acquisition and development. In the apartheid era some schools did not understand how to implement the language policy and most schools did not have libraries to provide resources for effective language learning and literacy acquisition. Implementing the OBE curriculum in actual teaching practice was a difficult task for these schools, but was made even more difficult because limited teaching and learning support materials were available (Department of Education, 1996). In South Africa the innate literacy concept, as expressed in the Language in Education Policy (LiEP), has been fraught with apprehension and inconsistency, and is underpinned by racial and linguistic overtones (Tollenfoen & Tsui, 2002). It is the contention of this study that, while these policies were introduced under the banner of redressing discrimination and inequalities in education, they are themselves potentially discriminatory, and have adversely affected both learners’ access to education and their performance.

The underlying reason for the above state of affairs appears to be a mismatch between government policy and implementation. This study will suggest that

the key stakeholders are not working together in implementing literacy and language policies. For example, the policy requires that instruction take place in mother tongue from Grade R to Grade 3, yet some parents insist on instruction in English. The problem here is that the fact that some parents have accepted the previous colonial language as the language of empowerment does not mean that it needs to be the language of learning and teaching for their children: for example, it could be studied as a subject (Adams & Waghid, 2005; Webb & Kembo-Sure, 2000). The policy states that it is an advantage for learners to use mother tongue as the language of learning and teaching. However, policies are often rendered meaningless or confused because of the incapacity of school governing bodies (SGBs) to interpret policies so that they can be implemented at classroom level (Webb, 2002; Jones, 2011). Certain SGBs also appear unwilling to go along with government provisions (e.g. teaching in isiZulu.) Next, teacher training is not always aligned with government policies (Skinner, 2003). Moreover, both teachers and learners lack the resources which would enable them to carry out the new policies. A complicating factor in the process of literacy acquisition is that the switch from Mother Tongue to English (also government policy) needs to be handled so as to support literacy development rather than hindering it.

Finally, not only are teachers not properly prepared to deal with literacy acquisition in terms of policy and resulting curriculum changes, but training also does not prepare them adequately for a multicultural multilingual teaching/learning context. Taylor (2010) comments that it is self-evident that teachers cannot teach what they themselves do not know. Many research initiatives in other multi-lingual countries focused on the link between learning, cognitive development and literacy acquisition (Webb & Kembo-Sure, 2000). Without exception these research initiatives have found that learners acquire and develop these competences best when using their mother tongue.

In view of the complex layers of social factors impacting on literacy acquisition and development, the orientation within which the problem is to be addressed is critical realism (Bhaskar, 1978; 1986) which works towards application of theory to address social problems. It is thought that this focus on the social

mechanisms affecting literacy acquisition and development might make an original contribution to the field, and that the findings will feed specialist knowledge on the current state of literacy acquisition in formal education into the area of teacher training so as to address the problem of lack of preparedness of teachers to deal with literacy acquisition (Green & Evans, 2008). The project will involve an investigation of literacy teaching and learning practices in three different schools, namely, ex-Model C, semi-urban and rural (see Figure 1.3). Recommendations will include comment on the need for training and support to be carried to higher levels of education (i.e. secondary, tertiary/FET).

In order to inform the conducting of research of this nature in South Africa, information about literacy acquisition is essential. Acquisition of language and literacy in our schools is complex in nature because of our being a multicultural society, and because multilingualism in South Africa varies in different sociolinguistic settings. These are just a few examples of the many variations:

- In many provinces of South Africa the language of the immediate community is clearly identifiable (e.g. Zulu in Zululand-Natal, Xhosa in the Eastern Cape, and Southern Sotho in the Orange Free State).
- In the Western Cape Afrikaans is clearly the lingua franca (as is Kiswahili in East Africa) this makes it the obvious choice in most schools despite some negative post-apartheid attitudes towards Afrikaans.
- In other areas the predominant language is less clear. For instance, in some eastern parts of Northern Cape, Tswana tends to be used (as in the neighbouring North-Western Province) and not Afrikaans (as in the rest of the province).
- In metropolitan areas such as Johannesburg English may have to be used in school from an early level because no other accepted lingua franca is available (Block, 2001).

**ACQUISITION OF LITERACY AND DEVELOPMENT AT SCHOOL LEVEL
FOCUSING ON GRADES 4 TO 6**

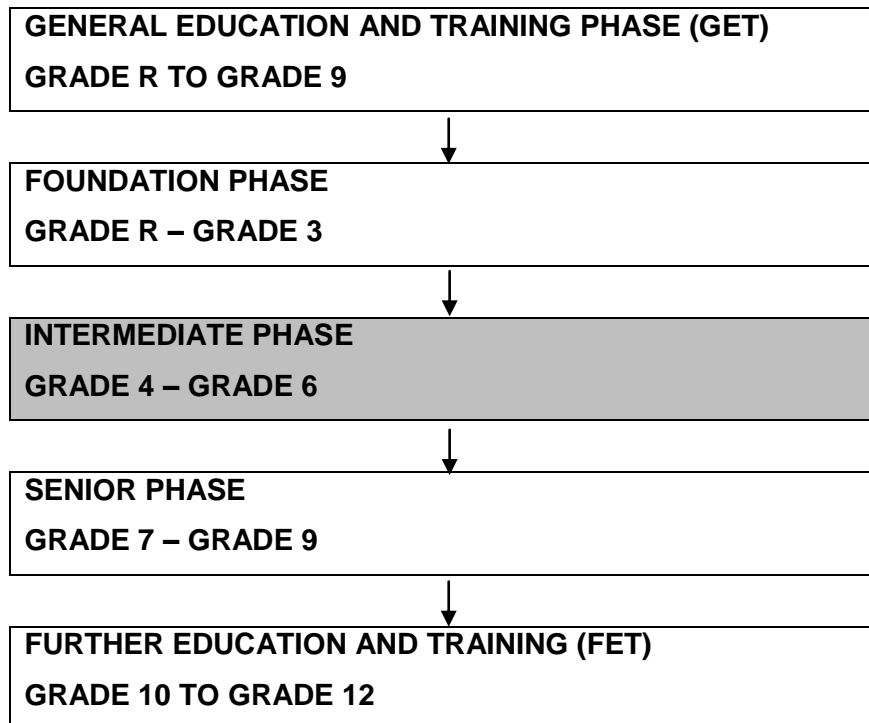


Figure 1.2 Acquisition of literacy and development at school level

Acquisition of literacy and development is crucial in primary schools because it provides the foundation for further learning. Moreover, teachers need to be updated with literacy skills in order for successful teaching and learning to take place at this level. During my reading and investigative research activities I established that there is a paucity of research about literacy and language acquisition, particularly in the switch of language made in Grade 4 to 6 (see Figure 1.2). This suggested that it would be worthwhile to investigate the area of literacy acquisition at this stage, in order to fill this gap.

1.3 Aim and purpose of the research

The aim of this project is to investigate the process of literacy acquisition and development in primary schools. The investigation will be focusing specifically

on how learners acquire literacy, and the involvement of teaching training and support for educators. It is hoped that this study will provide an understanding of the conceptual and contextual factors in primary education with regard to the topic. It is anticipated that the investigation will identify gaps in the acquisition and development of literacy, as well as provide recommendations for teacher training and support. It is also hoped that the findings will feed specialist knowledge on the current state of literacy acquisition in formal education into the area of teacher training as to address the problem of lack of preparedness of teachers to deal with literacy acquisition (Green & Evans, 2008). The purpose of this study is to investigate the state of the learning and teaching process in primary education and how teachers are supported and developed in this area. In doing so, an attempt will be made to identify underlying social factors which can be seen to bring about the current state of affairs.

This project involves an investigation of literacy teaching and learning practices in three different types of schools, namely, ex-Model C, semi-urban and rural. The selected research sites are three public schools in the Ethekewini Region: Milo Primary school (semi-urban), in the Mariannhill area, Joel Primary School (ex-Model C), in the Pinetown area, and John Primary School (rural) in the Ndwedwe District (see Figure 1.3).

1.4 Scope of the study

This study is confined to and focused on three primary schools in KwaZulu-Natal. No attempt is made to generalise acquisition of literacy and development and specifically in the area of teacher training and support at these selected primary schools with schools in the rest of South Africa. However, the findings may be relevant to other schools, so as to enable teachers, school management, parents and policy makers to understand, and hence deal with the phenomenon of literacy acquisition and development, in particular, the roles and functions which need to be carried out for it to take place effectively.

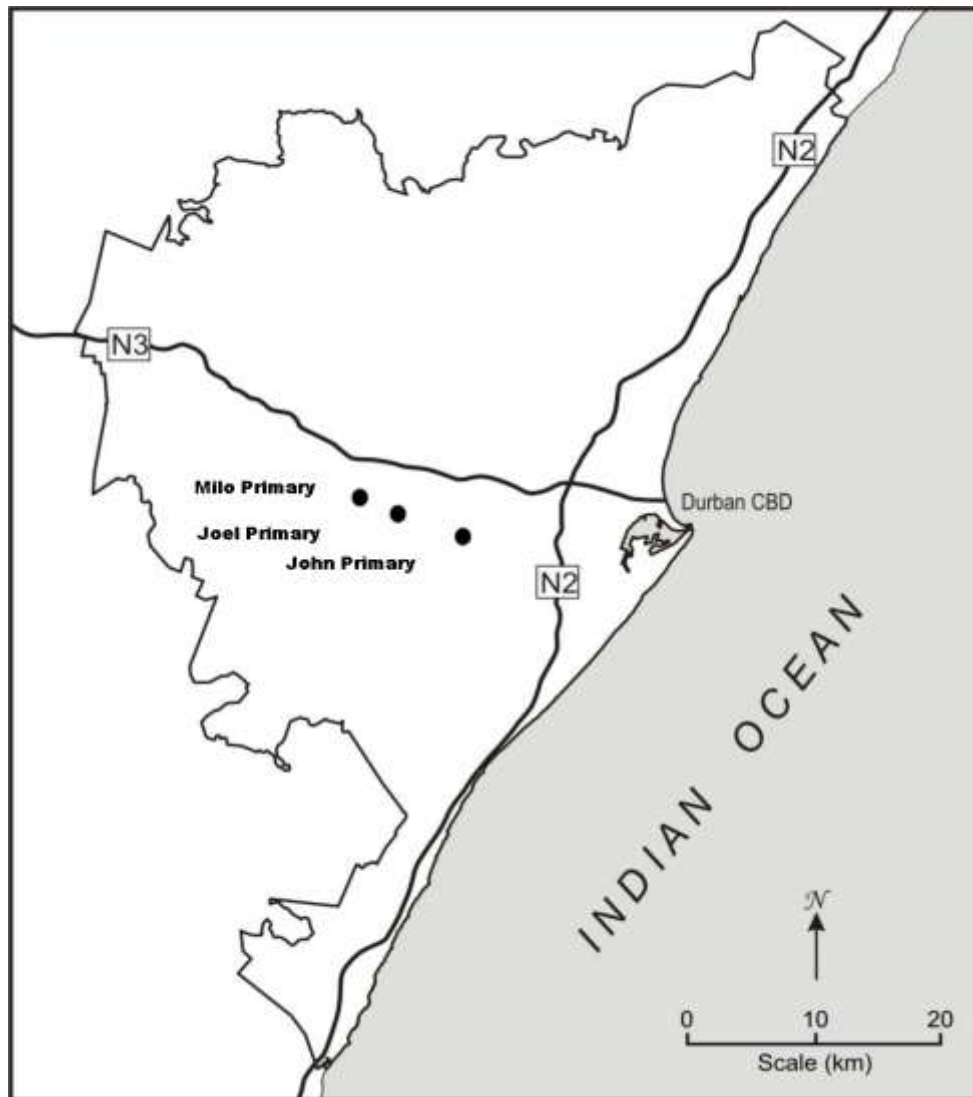


Figure 1.3 Map indicating the three schools in the Ethekewini Region

1.5 Summary of chapters

The content of the various chapters is as follows:

Chapter One outlines the introduction, rationale, purpose, significance and scope of the study. This pre-empts and introduces the issues to be later explored in the first four sub-questions of research question 1., namely:

- a. How are government literacy policies implemented in practice (i.e. at classroom level)?

- b. How do learners experience the acquisition and development of literacy in the classroom?
- c. How do teachers experience developing literacy competences in the classroom?
- d. What preparation (if any) did they receive for developing literacy competences?

Chapter Two starts by delineating five key concepts in the research, namely: literacy, (literacy) acquisition, (literacy) development, and pedagogical and andragogical approaches to learning. These concepts are crucial to finding the answers to research questions 2. and 3., in clarifying the concepts which are applied in actual teaching and learning practice:

2. What underlying social factors can be seen to impact on the practice of literacy acquisition and development?
3. What recommendations for teacher training and support are suggested by the answers to the above questions?

This is because learners' experience of literacy acquisition and development at classroom level is shaped not only by the teachers' experiences, but also by the pedagogical approach/es used by different teachers. The chapter then carries out a review of South African and international literature, which provide a background to research questions 1. to 3., and in a sense, pre-empt some of the answers. The answers, however, will be viewed as being interlinked. This is because of the complex layering of causal factors emanating, for the most part, from existing social structures and mechanisms, and which are not amenable to piecemeal educational adjustments (e.g. changing the syllabus).

Chapter Three focuses on the research orientation, which is pragmatic in dealing with the realities of the given situation, yet which offers a theory which takes into account the causes of things, and the fact that events take place in a complex layering of natural (e.g. geographical) and social (e.g. community values) factors. Chapter Three, then, provides an overview of the critical realist philosophy, the general composition and scope of the orientation critical

realism, some criticisms and some fallacies. This approach should signal that all of the research questions do not stand alone, but explore a complex social phenomenon influenced by a layered, complex social situation. It is the contention of this study, that unpacking the “causes of things”, will go some way towards suggesting effective long term solutions (i.e. those sought in answer to question 3.) instead of the temporary stop-gap measures currently employed. Chapter Three explains the focus on social factors which are probed in research question 3., namely “What underlying social factors can be seen to impact on the practice of literacy acquisition and development?”

Chapter Four explains the chosen research methodology used to answer the research questions. Then details of the selection of the ward (for the survey) and the three schools and participants (for the interviews) are given. Next, the data gathering method is shown to entail an exploratory, descriptive, and contextualised research design, implementing the quantitative and qualitative methods. Lastly, an account is given of how ethical principles are dealt with, followed by a discussion on the measures used to ensure trustworthiness.

Chapter Five attempts to interpret the quantitative data gathered from educators in one ward, so as to arrive at any general trends and tendencies in answering the research questions, and using statistical analysis to detect any uneven distribution, skews and/or bias.

Chapter Six deals with analysis of the qualitative data, and shows how the causes for the current state of affairs (including the trends revealed in Chapter Five) were probed in a further attempt to answer the research questions.

Chapter Seven provides the conclusions and recommendations of this project, the latter answering research question 3, “What recommendations for teacher training and support are suggested by the answers to the above questions?”

1.6 Conclusion

In this chapter the research problem and rationale for the study were presented. The value of the study is thought to be in making recommendations based on

an understanding of the reality of not only the teachers' and learners' experiences but also of the underlying social factors which bring about this state of affairs. This study will attempt to address the fact that there is little research relating to literacy acquisition particularly from Grade 4 to 6 in South Africa. It is hoped that this research will not only address this gap, but add in some measure to the existing body of knowledge on literacy acquisition in developing countries. The findings might also be used to inform language and education policy decisions as well as instructional and reading material at school. In the next chapter I will explain the key concepts that are of relevance to this study, followed by a discussion of International and South African literature. It is anticipated that this will provide insight into literacy acquisition and development and how it has been researched and understood in the past.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

“Penultimately acquiring and using literacy is the key and currency of education”
(Joseph, 2007).

2.1 Introduction

This chapter has two aims: firstly, to explain the key concepts relevant to this study, and secondly, to review the literature on literacy acquisition, in particular, pertaining to the Intermediate Phase in primary education in specific relation to teacher training and support. This review will enable the researcher to focus on scholarly perspectives on the role of learners and teachers in literacy acquisition and development in primary education at school level. The chapter closes by summarising the implications and by identifying omissions regarding the role that the teachers’ and learners’ play in the acquisition and development of literacy as well as problems that are found in the literature.

Recently a rich vein of literature has addressed some critical issues in the field of literacy acquisition, both in terms theoretical perspectives and of their implication in educational and policy contexts (Street, 2001). Literacy and literacy education have been and continue to be disputed terms and contested domains. Although scholarly debates have identified literacy problems in society in general, little has been said about learners in the Intermediate Phase of Primary Education. It is apparently assumed that these learners can cope with whatever literacy demands are made on them. Placing literacy acquisition in this phase under scrutiny might assist the quality of education in South Africa, as well as performance at this and subsequent levels (Mati, Townsend & Versveld, 2001). As suggested in Chapter One, this study’s focus is on reading because literature reveals that South African schools are experiencing many challenges in reading as shown by the following examples. Ms Angelina Matise Motshekga, Minister of Basic Education in South Africa, stated that there had to be an increased focus on foundation skills such as literacy and numeracy

(Serrao, 2010). 2001 was declared the “Year of the reader” because the Minister of Education acknowledged that schools were experiencing reading problems. The University of Pretoria administered the Progress in Reading Literacy Study (2006) and SA had the lowest score. A reading programme showed that the Grade 3 reading scores increased only by about 5% since the year before; Grade 6 Systemic Evaluation showed the literacy average of 35%; and in 2003 the Grade 3 results on reading were only 39% (Mullis, Kennedy, Martin & Sainsbury, 2004; Taylor, 2010a). Reading challenges reflect poor matric results (Naidoo, 2009; Ndlovu, 2010; Serrao, 2010). There is also a considerable body of literature about literacy and a range of disputed claims about its nature, its cognitive consequences, and its acquisition and development. This study is concerned with the field of literacy acquisition and development, more specifically, in the area of teacher training in primary education. Its aim is to establish current literacy teaching and learning practices in formal education so that, ultimately, recommendations can be made for teacher training and support. However, as this study sets out to show, teachers are just one small component of the overall problems, and are in fact coping as best as they can with very little in the way of training, support and resources.

Literacy is a key competence for schooling and a key life skill (Joseph, 2007). In the changing face of education in post-apartheid SA, provision has been made by the government to democratise education, and, in particular, to allow all students equity of access to key competences such as literacy. However, there are signs that all is not well at the level of implementation. For example, the Department of Education (KZN), revealed that only 15% of Grade 3 learners passed their literacy tests (Serrao, 2008). In particular, teachers do not appear to be coping with the new dispensation, and are generally demoralised and demotivated. It must be stressed that the problem is complex and multi-layered, and not just a simple question of applying linguistic knowledge or skills. The underlying reason for the above state of affairs appears to be a mismatch between government policy and implementation, in effect, “a mismatch between the dream and the reality” (Webb, 2002, p.30).

The acquisition and development of literacy is the vehicle through which language makes it possible for us to understand and make sense of the world by providing a cognitive scaffold of concepts. It is through the use of such a framework, consisting of words and meanings, that we interpret the world, represent it in our minds, talk about it and exchange information with other people. “Our entire knowledge and experience of the world is mediated by language” (Simola, 2001, p.16), and students should leave school knowing about language, and knowing why language and literacy are crucial to the living of a full satisfying life (Ortiz, 2006). Language learning is an essential part of the school curriculum so that learners can develop primary language proficiency in reading and literacy skills. In the United States literacy diversity has become “as American as apple pie” (Thiederman, 2008). South Africa has always had a diverse multicultural and multilingual society, but this is still not reflected in the curriculum in terms of accommodating language diversity. Furthermore, the National Curriculum Statement document refers to the literacy teaching and development in loose, ideological, “state of the art” terms, and does not explain the mechanisms of literacy teaching which teachers are expected to follow.

2.2 Conceptual framework

Five concepts which underpin this study are literacy, literacy acquisition, literacy development, pedagogy and andragogy. These concepts relate to how learners and teachers experience literacy. These concepts will be discussed below to show their significance in relation to this study. According to Chisholm, Motala & Vally (2003) there is conceptual chaos in the field of education, especially in Primary Education, in relation to literacy acquisition and development. No inquiries are innocent today, as concepts come to us with complex histories, tangled in ancient and contemporary conflicts, which are complicit in old and new research. In unpacking the above concepts, this research attempts to find some clarity in relation to this study. Many scholars have pointed to the importance of literacy, literacy acquisition, literacy development, as well as to the approaches represented by the terms pedagogy and andragogy (Ball & Kenny, 1990). Core concepts such as pedagogy and andragogy are central to effective teaching and learning, and should be at the heart of any teacher education training program (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2003). Literacy

acquisition and development, however, is the key issue at Primary Level, and this will be dealt with next.

2.2.1 The concept of literacy

The concept of literacy is multifaceted and requires the incorporation and synchronisation of numerous cognitive, perceptual and linguistic skills and abilities. Literacy in general continues to be seen as a narrow perception of a single elementary skill. However, a broad spectrum of literacy competencies can transform people and communities, lend additional skills to problem solving, and earn the respect of others who tend to view the illiterate (Gough, 2001) as ignorant and marginalised persons fit only for common labour. There is a preoccupation in South Africa with the process of learners' acquisition and development of literacy; in South African schools research indicates that literacy acquisition is a major problem (Soudien, 2008). An understanding of the concept of literacy is crucial in developing an appropriate pedagogy. In examining the concept of literacy as it has evolved over the years, traditional understanding has dealt with it solely as the ability to acquire the 3 Rs, that is reading, writing, and arithmetic, although a fourth "R", namely, reasoning, could be added in view of the growing recognition of the significance of higher order competencies such as problem-solving (see Figure 2.1). At the end of the Second World War UNESCO assumed the responsibility for putting literacy on the educational agenda of the national governments. Since the narrow understanding of literacy had led to motivational problems for people, the concept of "functional literacy" was introduced.

This focused on the economic and development potential of literacy, and was later put into practice in the form of the Experimental World Literacy Programme (EWLP) which was conducted by UNESCO from 1967 to 1973 in eleven experimental projects around the world. The EWLP experience, however, showed that illiteracy still remained a problem with the marginalized groups. In the 1970s, due mainly to the influence of Freire, literacy was seen as a strategy for liberation to enable adults not only to read the word but also to "read the world". Freire's (1970) emphasis on literacy to "liberate", as opposed to literacy to "domesticate," captured the imagination of those who started understanding

the transformative potential of literacy. More recently, however, literacy has taken on several specialist meanings, such as technological literacy, mathematical literacy and visual literacy. While it may be difficult to gauge the degree to which literacy has an impact on an individual's overall happiness, one can infer that an increase in literacy will lead to the improvement of an individual's life and the development of societies (Stern, 1983).

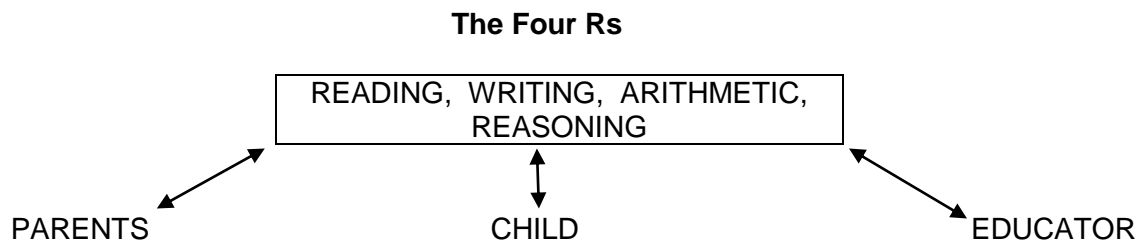


Figure 2.1 Acquisition of literacy and development at school level

On the basis of the field visits and the literature review conducted during the research project, it would seem that the large majority of literacy and post-literacy programmes are built upon a traditional approach to literacy. Literacy is seen as a process by which a set of technical skills of reading, writing and numeracy is acquired, and once grasped, these skills can be applied in all kinds of contexts for many different forms of print-based learning. The approach is similar to that held in Primary Level: it suggests that one should learn literacy first and practise it afterwards. Literacy is then seen as a prerequisite for further development programmes - without literacy, the participant groups are felt to be severely disadvantaged. This “literacy comes first” model rests on a number of assumptions that are questionable. It is founded, for instance, on a deficit view of illiteracy, on the belief that autonomous learning and development activities can only start after the acquisition of literacy. Furthermore, it assumes that the acquisition of literacy itself brings with it several clear advantages in thinking and reasoning and other abilities to relate to the outside world. Literacy within this view is thought to be acquired in a sequential process, part of a continuum from being illiterate to learning literacy, to developing literacy skills further (the post-literacy phase), leading eventually to independent learning. The process of learning literacy associated with these assumptions is based upon a limited and

specially prepared group of materials (primers) which are received by those who attend literacy classes. The implications of this for post-literacy learning are clear. Most post-literacy programmes consist of a further programme of training, aimed at those who have completed the initial primer based programme, and using materials written specifically for this group of learners. The term “literacy” is often used as if it were an agreed-on constant with a common meaning, or standard set of reading and writing skills. Reading is commonly viewed as a basic set of skills, widely adapted to all kinds of texts and reading situations.

South Africa needs to take on the challenge of improving young children’s reading skills, and should not assume that, once the basics of literacy are acquired, learners would be well equipped for literacy-related tasks later in life (Blair, 1999). The idea that basic reading skills automatically evolve into more advanced reading skills, and that these basic skills are highly generalizable and adaptable, is partially correct: the basic perceptual and decoding skills that are connected with early literacy learning in the Foundation Phase, (e.g. phonics, phonological awareness, and sight vocabulary) are entailed in virtually all reading tasks (Rayner & Pollatsek, 1994). The pyramid in Figure 2.1 illustrates the researcher’s perspective on how development of literacy acquisition progresses in South African schools. The base of the pyramid represents the highly generalisable basic skills that include basic decoding skills, understanding of various print and literacy conventions (e.g. understanding that text must be meaningful, the primacy of print, namely: illustration, directionality, concept of word), recognition of high-frequency words, and some basic fluency routines (e.g. responding appropriately to basic punctuation). Most learners master these kinds of basic reading skills and conventions during the primary grades, and even those slow to develop tend to master all of these skills before the Intermediate Phase. The Intermediate Phase entails literacy skills common to many tasks, including generic comprehension strategies, recognition of common word meanings, and basic fluency. As learners go beyond these basic aspects of literacy, they begin to add more sophisticated routines and responses to their repertoires.

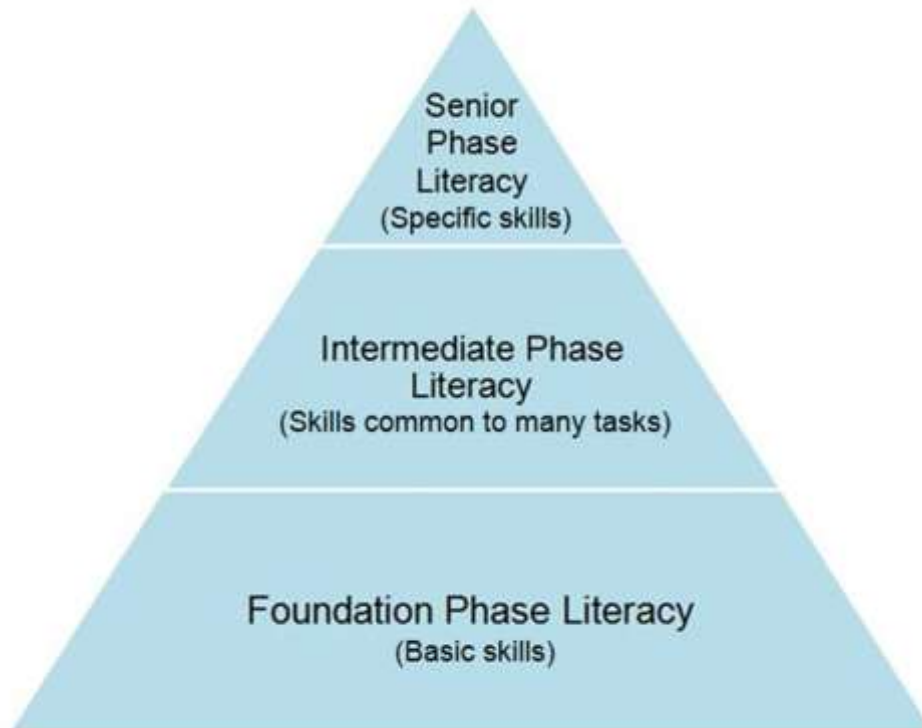


Figure 2.2 Model of literacy acquisition and development progression

In this phase various reading comprehension responses and strategies come into play. But the majority of South African learners are not gaining these intermediate reading tools, and are finding it difficult to read texts (Rayner & Pollatsek, 1994). In literacy development, progressing higher in the pyramid means learning more sophisticated, but less generalizable, skills and routines. Given the range of learner abilities and the difficulty of learning these more sophisticated routines, teachers are experiencing major problems in facilitating literacy acquisition (Shanahan, 2007). It must be remembered that literacy problems are tackled on the premise of the South African educational system, namely, that decoding skills only are required to be taught in the Foundation Phase (Grade 1 to 3) and that learners exiting this phase are able to decode adequately (Machet & Pretorius, 2004). In the Intermediate Phase decoding skills are largely taken for granted, with very little attention given to further developing decoding skills recently acquired. It is also assumed that the ability to decode means the ability to comprehend. For these reasons, for many children literacy skills are sub-optimally developed (Morrell, 2004).

Assumptions about the supposedly ubiquitous nature of literacy and the alleged generalizability of the skills involved are based on the failure to realize the extent to which the nature of literacy – as well as the ways in which it is acquired and developed - is shaped by its social setting. According to Leu, Kinzer, Coiro and Cammack (2004), the nature of literacy is defined by social forces:

Historically, the social forces affecting the nature of literacy have had diverse origins. The need to record business transactions in societies moving out of a subsistence economy, the forces of oppression and resistance, the dissemination of religious dogma, the emergence of democratic institutions, and many other disparate forces all have influenced the nature of literacy in different eras (Leu *et al.*, p.1573-3).

Literacy can also be viewed in the social context of emerging technologies, which, while they may further expand and change the development of literacy (Leu *et al.* 2004), are often developed to benefit vested corporate interests rather than to improve the quality of life. According to Pratt (2007) literacy could also be viewed in the context of “resistance” technologies offering freeware alternatives to developing countries (e.g. the Ubuntu operating system). As Pratt explains, this means that students not only develop new literacy skills associated with the electronic medium, but also the macro-competences of adapting to different software patterns and routines, which demand (and develop) more advanced conceptualising. Literacy can be viewed in the context of challenging political subjugation in South Africa (e.g. Drum magazine and other resistance literature), and in following post-colonial oppression elsewhere in Africa, as in the suppressing the press and aggravation, tormenting and killing of journalists. In the context of government corruption in South Africa literacy can be viewed, both in the plethora of commercial literature representing luxury goods as success markers, and the role played by the press in exposing corruption. As Pratt points out, literacy can be viewed in the context of the exploitation of newly-literate societies, as in:

- the monopoly on print (and electronic) media by majority political parties;

- the flood of hard sell commercial literature, touting products which will magically impart “first world” quality of life;
- corporate medical exploitation, particularly of African women (e.g. by means of glossy brochures colonising popular women’s magazines, and stressing the need for a lifetime regimen of largely unnecessary pharmaceutical drugs and operations);
- the irreversible damage caused by resistance medical literature (e.g. the role of dissident Aids views in postponing the Government roll-out of anti-retrovirals in South Africa);
- the exploitation of newly-literate student populations (e.g. by registering students who do not have the minimum level of literacy required to complete their courses, without making provision for their needs) (Pratt, 2007, p.39).

The social contexts which shape literacy have implications for education throughout history, and the technologies prompted by the social context change literary instruction on a regular basis. And it is in the context of education in South Africa that this study is based, not a neutral context, obviously, and as Pratt comments, from a critical realist perspective, any “truths” discovered will be tentative, incomplete, and driven by local needs (2007, p.11). In the same way that social context shapes literacy, literacy impacts on social progress. This is because literacy sustains development, and is not only a positive outcome of a developmental process, but also a lever of change and an instrument for achieving further social progress (Leu *et al.*, 2004, p.1574) .

The UNESCO report makes the point that our notions of what it means to be literate (and illiterate) are shaped by “academic research, institutional agendas, national context, cultural values and personal experiences” (UNESCO, 2006). The researcher’s conceptualising of literacy involves taking a broad definition of literacy and applying it to practice in a classroom setting: it is beyond the basics of language practice. Literacy is not only about understanding concepts in reading, spelling and writing, which is regarded as a diminished view, but also about other things which promote higher levels of thinking (Street, 2003). With technology increasingly changing the way we communicate and interact with

each other, literacy is no longer limited to the *Oxford Dictionary* definition of the ability to read and write (Soanes & Stevenson, 2005). Literacy teaching and learning should not be limited, therefore it also includes the communications people need to understand and express what they are learning. Each key learning area has its own forms of literacy, and teachers of those areas are responsible for teaching them, which is driving the framework and professional development being implemented throughout our schools. Literacy acquisition is a foundational skill that should continue to develop throughout a learner's time at school because it is a tool for further learning. Reading and writing are rooted in conceptions of knowledge in a particular educational context with its meaning and practices (Street, 1995). The researcher's understanding of literacy has come to resemble that of Egan (2007): it is like bottling lightning, which may be attempted by only the most brave or foolhardy.

To illustrate some of its complex nature, literacy:

- is polysemantic (Hempenstall, 2008), an encourager of “disembedded” or “abstract” thinking (Egan, 1997, p.41);
- involves “analytical and critical thinking” that includes reading and writing (Pally, 2000);
- is highly complex, requiring the integration and co-ordination of many cognitive, perceptual and linguistic skills and abilities (Carson & Leki, 1993);
- is acquired rather than learnt (New London Group, 1996);
- and usually carries two meanings (i.e. both the learning of skills, and the use of these skills after the period of initial literacy instruction, (Mati, Townsend & Versveld, 2001).

Literacy should be about texts of conventional and contemporary nature in communication technologies via spoken language, multimedia and print and most importantly applying it to practice in a classroom setting. It must be literacy for learning (i.e. teaching and learning literacy in the curriculum) and especially in acquiring and developing literacy. Literacy is not merely the cognitive skills of reading, writing and arithmetic, for literacy helps in the

acquisition of learning of life skills. These life skills are strengthened by usage and application throughout learners lives, and lead to forms of individual, community and societal development that are sustainable. The roots of literacy are established before children enter school, particularly at preschool (Fleish, 2007). This highlights the vital role parents play in helping to support this development. Studies show that learners in Grade 1 make faster gains in literacy than in kindergarten or earlier (Anderson, 2005). This increased rate in learning is probably due to increased instructional attention to literacy in first grade and acquisition is discussed next.

2.2.2 The concept of acquisition

Speed of early literacy acquisition is variable and is highly impacted by instruction and experience. The various orders of acquisition of early literacy skills are overlapping. This means that children can make gains in all of these aspects of learning simultaneously. It also means that development within a particular sequence can be overlapping as well. Phonological development proceeds from gross to specific; but children can learn to hear some phonemes as separable while they are still mastering the auditory distinctions among syllables. Hence literacy acquisition is an indispensable means for effective social and educational participation, contributing to human development. There is an apparent distinction between the concept of acquisition and learning which has not stood up to scientific investigation (Grady, Dobrovolsky & Francis, 1996). It has been found that, even if learning and acquisition are different processes, they are interwoven: that means, for example, that learners “pick up” literacy as a formal instruction (Stern, 1983).

Figure 2.3 outlines the foundational skills for learners to become life-long learners in continually acquiring and developing their literary skills. Ultimately, learners learn what they are taught. Acquisition takes place gradually over time, and the initial phases of development are occupied with the growth of precursor skills or enabling abilities more than with conventional literacy skills such as decoding, reading comprehensions, or writing (Shanahan, 2007). Scholars on childhood acquisition of literacy like Heath (1996) and Gee (1990) have shown that schools are good places to practice mainstream literacy once you already

have the foundations. But they are not good places to acquire those foundations if you have not already had the chance. The compatibility between home culture and literacy practices and school culture in mainstream families put mainstream children at an advantage when they enter Grade R. These children have been socialised into schooled literacy practices from their first few months of life.

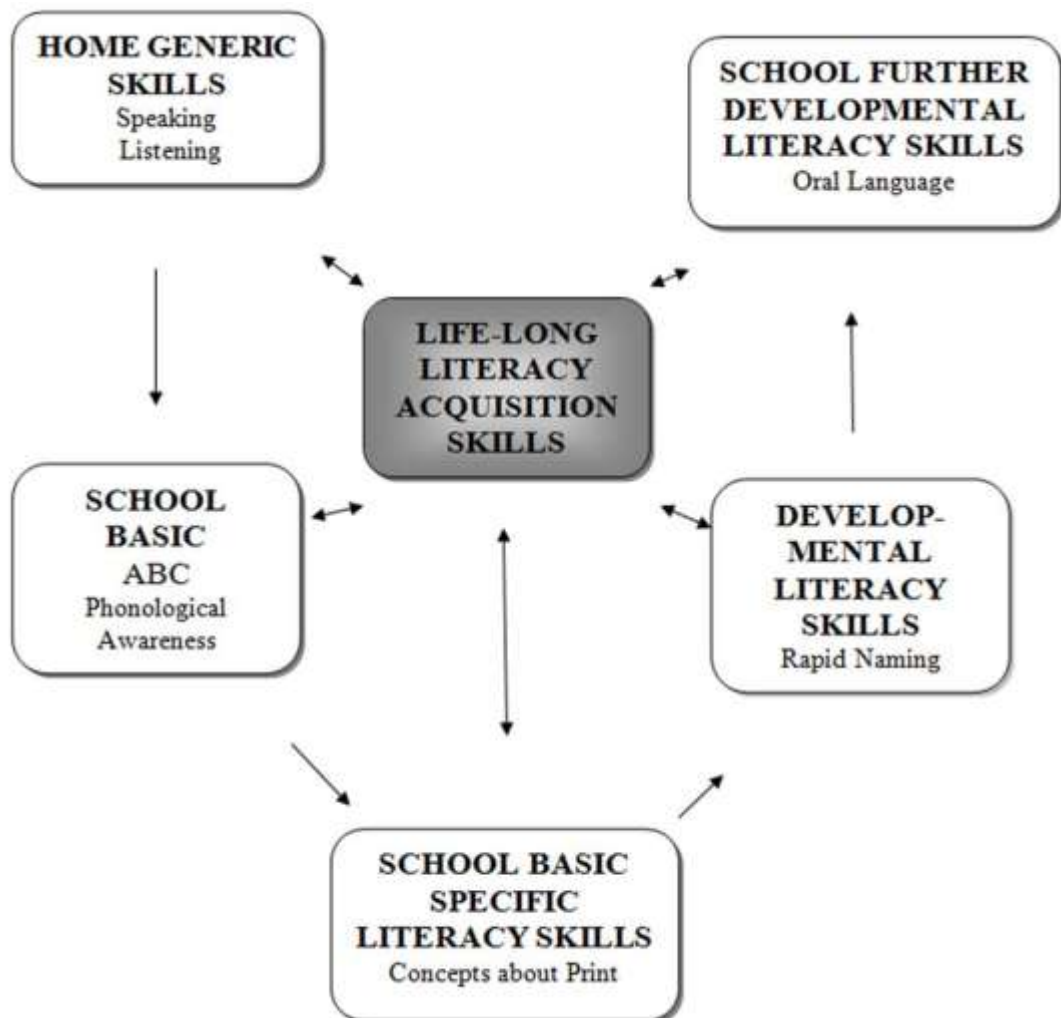


Figure 2.3 Acquisition of literacy and development at school level

Below are listed some of these key principles (see Figure 2.3):

- Literacy is acquired in a gradual and mainly subconscious process; it cannot be quickly and consciously “learned”, for example, through teaching grammar structures (however, this should not be misunderstood to imply that grammatical structures may or should not be taught).
- Literacy acquisition is sustained by experiencing large amounts of input (listening, reading) and developed by output when using / producing language (speaking, writing).
- The level of the literacy used in the input is important: it should be familiar enough for the learner to make meaning of it, but have enough new elements (vocabulary / structures) to promote development (according to research, roughly 80% familiar and 20% new).
- An additional language learnt and developed in much the same way as the home language is learnt (the “mother tongue”): Firstly we hear it, we make sense of what we hear, and then we try it out for ourselves when we communicate.
- All languages are acquired in much the same way, but the home language is further advanced in the developmental process than additional languages are.
- Mistakes are an expected part of the acquisition process. For literacy to be acquired, mistakes must be made.
- Literacy is acquired holistically in all learning, not only in the language class.
- The ideal conditions for language learning to take place are conditions in which the learner is relaxed and enjoys the process (Christie, Enz & Vukelich, 2003, p.6).

The researcher’s understanding of acquisition is that it is invented by learners and unfolds implications beyond their dreams. It is not a simple skill but an

enlargement of learners' cognitive tool kit. It is about attaining competence and securing learners for admission for the potentials of life. Research has shown that the most effective way to teach literacy is to combine a communicative approach with some teaching of language structure. The structure of literacy should be taught in context, and with attention to meaning as well as form in order for learners to develop literary skills. The research question question 1 bears relevance to the practice of literacy and acquisition discussed above.

2.2.3 The concept of development

The concept of development needs an understanding of the explicit progression of growth in the learner. Precursor skills or emerging abilities that appear early in the acquisition of literacy or that predate its acquisition, but that are undoubtedly implicated in later literacy accomplishment are vital, (Kelly, 1969). If these skills are not well integrated in the early stages of reading, development does not take place smoothly; development implies not only increases in skill or ability, but also increases in the integration and co-ordination of these diverse skills. Developing in learners the capacity of literacy used as effective instruments for high-functions, will necessarily entail:

- promoting literacy development use in education, high-function public contexts, thus increasing their skills that will lead to prestige and status;
- ensuring learners effective linguistic adaptation by promoting their standardisation codification, technicalisation and lexicographical expansion;
- increasing their knowledge of literacy skills and give them the ability to control their own destiny through literacy development, to interpret and manage the globalised, technical and competitive world and the knowledge era (Block, 2001).

There are signs, however, that this traditional view of literacy is changing. First, there is a growing awareness that there is no one universally applicable form of literacy development. Rather, there are different literacies for different groups - urban and rural populations, for example, ethnic, racial, religious or linguistic groups. Programmes must include developmental activities and working

subsequently towards literacy related to those activities. This presents a different approach (a “literacy comes second” model) of the relationship between literacy and development programmes. Surveys of the retention of literacy skills and development (Grigg, Donahue & Dion, 2007; Pressley, 2004) indicate that such skills are best retained when they are used in “real” situations with “real” materials. Evaluations have shown that, despite some difficulties, the use of existing literacy practices is the basis of learning literacy and development. Current understandings of lifelong learning are challenging the view that autonomous lifelong learning can only start once an adult has completed the first stages of learning literacy. It is now clear that learning is not dependent on literacy. Non-literate adults are already autonomous learners; they are engaged in lifelong learning (Ribbens & Pretorius, 2005). Those who talk about a learner achieving the status of “independent learner” only towards the end of the process of learning literacy have a particular form of learning in mind - book learning (study) - which they usually see as superior to experiential learning.

The researcher’s understanding is thus clear that literacy is not necessarily a prerequisite for development. Developmental activities are often commenced by non-literate groups, and the need to master literacy skills in these cases arises primarily and most effectively from these activities. The evidence we have received indicates that programmes built on the assumption that the acquisition of literacy has to come first and that these skills will subsequently be used for development are less effective than those built on a “literacy comes second” model where the acquisition of literacy skills is a step within a process of helping people to complete some task on which they have already embarked. Students learn literacy best when they feel that they need these skills and that they are able to use them to achieve some immediate purpose. The fact that there are different uses of literacy must call for different forms of literacy instruction and post-literacy provision. And this implies that the idea of sequential stages, which is implied in the word “post-literacy”, even when seen within a continuum, is no longer acceptable. The concept of a distinguishable post-literacy stage needs to be rejected.

Languages are the major component of the Literacy Learning Programme in the Foundation Phase, and the main objective of literacy teaching is to enable learners to communicate effectively. This is achieved when learners are able to process and access information in order to communicate the ideas to establish relationships between self and society; so that these learners can express themselves creatively and effectively as illustrated in Figure 2.4 indicates. Furthermore, the teaching of languages facilitates all other learning and allows progress towards the critical and developmental outcomes. This is a list of outcomes that are derived from the Constitution and are contained in the South African Qualifications Authority Act (1995). They describe the kind of citizen the education and training system should aim to create. Learners should demonstrate these outcomes at the appropriate level at Grades 9 and 12. They are the vision around which our education is built and as such should form the starting point for all planning of teaching as well as the final destination for all assessment. Learners will continue to progress against them along the path of life-long learning, but this is not currently what is happening in South Africa.



Figure 2.4 Foundation Phase Literacy Programme (adapted from Curriculum 2005)

2.2.4 The concepts of pedagogy and andragogy

Pedagogy and andragogy are important concept in literacy acquisition and development in South African schools. The two models are used in educational research to describe how learners learn, that is the pedagogical and andragogical models. These two concepts “pedagogy” and “andragogy” (Fleischer, 2005) are sometimes portrayed as polar opposites, which is not, however, the position taken in this study. While pedagogy, or the art or profession of teaching was considered to be an approach to childhood learning, andragogy was regarded as set of assumptions and methods that helped learners learn. In South African schools it is critical how teachers are trained to promote learning in a multicultural and multilingual classroom. The pedagogical model describes the traditional learning situation with which the learner depends on the teacher for learning to occur. The teacher assumes responsibility for making decisions about what will be learned, how it will be learned, and when it will be learned. A pedagogical approach places the learner in a submissive role. Andragogy, rather than being an opposite approach, can be seen to act in parallel with a pedagogical approach. Teaching is directed towards facilitating adult learning, and, in andragogy, is the art of helping adults to learn. However, both adults and younger learners have a major problem with illiteracy, because of the autonomous model of literacy that prevails in our country.

Internationally and in South Africa many changes are taking place, such as rapid technological advances demographic and socio-economic changes (Fang, 2004; Grady, Dobrovolsky & Francis, 1996). Fang *et al.* emphasise the importance of literacies for a multicultural society, and discuss how critical pedagogy can promote multicultural education and sensitivity to cultural differences. They then focus on the importance of developing literacy to critically analyse the wealth of media and library materials that characterise a technological society. It is evident from the above discussion that, while at one end of the spectrum, the concept of literacy is narrow, uni-dimensional and

limited to technical skills, at the other end is a concept of literacy that is multidimensional, multiple and context-specific.

The pedagogical approaches that are used for literacy programmes in our country are still limited. Inadequate attention has so far been paid to understanding how learners learn and what the barriers to their learning are. The teacher is defined as a “midwife”, and the teacher’s task is to draw students out, to “assist the students in giving birth to their own ideas, in making their own tacit knowledge explicit and elaborating on it” (McLeod, 1994, p.219) to support the evolution of the learners’ own thinking. The idea of capitalising on learners’ life experiences and relating theoretical concepts to these experiences is not new in the field of education. Over the years, the two terms are no longer considered to be opposites because they have been clarified, expanded and modified.

According to Fleischer (2005), five assumptions underpin the concept of andragogy:

- Learners need to know why they need to learn something before undertaking to learn it.
- Learners have a self-concept of being responsible for their own lives... they develop a deep psychological need to be seen and treated by others as being capable of self-direction.
- Learners come into an educational activity with both a greater volume and a different quality of experience from youths.
- Learners become ready to learn those things they need to know or...to cope effectively with their real-life situations.
- In contrast to children’s and youth’s subject-centered orientation to learning (at least in school), adults are life-centered (or task-centered or problem-centered) in their orientation to learning (Fleischer, 2005).

Roy Bhaskar’s transcendental realism suggests a programme for pedagogy that imbricates the material and the interpretive. Bhaskar sets down four principles that composition theorists and practitioners might follow:

- recognize that social forms are uniquely real and do play a role in causing events;
- grant the existence of objective social structures which are not created by human beings;
- consider that Rorty’s notion that social interaction consists of “coping” with others is limited; and
- realise that poetic or hermeneutic “redescription” does not render the sciences (social or physical) redundant. Carrying the anti-foundationalist paradigm to its most logical ends can make for a stronger pedagogy than has so far been developed” (Collier, 1998).

Table 2.1 Differences between andragogy and pedagogy (based on Knowles 1984)

Andragogy	Pedagogy
Learners are called “participants” or “learners.”	Learners are called “students.”
Independent learning style.	Dependent learning style.
Objectives are flexible.	Objectives are predetermined and inflexible
It is assumed that the learners have experience to contribute.	It is assumed that the learners are inexperienced and/or uninformed.
Active training methods are used.	Passive training methods, such as lecture, are used.
Learners influence timing and pace.	Trainer controls timing and pace.
Participant involvement is vital.	Participants contribute little to the experience.
Learning is real-life problem-centred.	Learning is content-centred.
Participants are seen as primary resources for ideas and examples.	Trainer is seen as the primary resource who provides ideas and examples.

The researcher’s understanding in differentiating between andragogy and pedagogy is based on Knowles account (1984), as contained in Table 2.1.

Some of these assumptions have spawned different understandings about learners learning. One of them has been in the area of self-directed learning, where learners assume control of their learning. While there is considerable work in this area, one criticism is that self-directed learning does not pay sufficient attention to the social context in which learning takes place.

2.3 Current approaches to literacy acquisition and development

In today's "Information age" the ability to read and write is crucial for maximizing success in the endeavours of daily life, continuing intellectual growth, and realizing learners' potential. Moreover, a literate citizenry is imperative to a nation's social and economic growth (Serrao, 2010). To show the importance of making informed decisions about literacy education, a few studies are analysed.

Internationally teachers have spent a century of education beholden to this generalist notion of literacy learning, the idea that if they provide adequate basic skills, from that point forward learners with adequate background knowledge will be able to read anything successfully. That view once seemed feasible, because schools were able to produce a sufficiently educated population for the nation's economic needs. Literacy was somewhat correlated with income, but there were high-literacy jobs that were low paying (e.g. teaching, (Deshler, Palincsar, Biancarosa & Nair, 2007). However, a consideration of new demands for literacy suggests that there is a growing need for more sophisticated development, and not just for the lowest achievers (Levy & Muranane, 2004). Thus there is a need to identify what a more advanced literacy curriculum might be, and to determine how it would best be implemented. In developed nations the majority of the population over the age of 17 possesses basic literacy skills in reading and writing, but the rate of literacy in developing nations is much lower. This lack of widespread literacy hinders the further development of such nations. International agencies like UNESCO are campaigning to raise literacy rates worldwide. While progress has been made and literacy rates have increased, the growth in population worldwide has led to a further expansion of illiterate individuals. UNESCO has

found a correlation between illiteracy and poverty, low life expectancy, and political oppression. Sri Lanka is an example of a developing nation that has shown a dramatic increase in literacy. Sri Lanka has a literacy rate of 96%, one of the highest literacy rates in all of South Asia and much higher than that expected of a developing country. This can be attributed to the country's policy of providing free education to all children regardless of income. In addition, the illiteracy rate for adults 15-24 is only 4.4% according to the 2001 census.

Schools must develop their own Literacy Policy to support literacy acquisition at classroom level. As each school is unique no one policy can satisfactorily describe all schools. Policies need to be reviewed on a regular basis with regard to schools expectations about frequency, and update the policy review. Policy must guide practices which are an integral part of literacy acquisition and development. Once schools have formal policies, they can take steps to monitor and evaluate. Official policy (LiEP) should be seen as something flexible and open to change, since in every school the sociolinguistic context is dynamic (Corson, 1999). Adoption of literacy and education policies reflect the rapidly changing demographic landscape, especially in South African schools, and the nature, merits and limitations of literacy acquisition and development. Literacy acquisition is a complex and problematic phenomenon. It is assumed that, pedagogically speaking, acquisition of literacy can be easily adapted at school for different cultures. However, teachers must be trained to understand the value of adapting literacy acquisition and development methodologies according to contextual exigencies. They can do this by adapting pedagogical styles to suit the different needs of diverse learners. Bhaskar (1989, 2008) argues that researchers in the human sciences are morally compelled to use the findings of contextualized social inquiry in transforming the social world in such a way as to bridge the gap between knowing and doing; this can then lead to transformation of undesirable or oppressive social practices.

Critical realist inquiry in literacy acquisition needs to be based on the practical everyday experiences of teachers and learners involved in inquiry. From a critical realist position, teachers' accounts from their own understanding and perspectives are vital to an understanding of how they themselves, as well as

the learners, experience the acquisition and development of literacy in the classroom. Critical realist research seeks to change the social world through identification and deconstruction of operational societal practice (Archer, Bhaskar, Collier, Lawson & Norrie, 1998). Social structures include attitudes, knowledge, values, development, acquiring and ideologies that promote unjust social practices. In Chapter One I mentioned that this study's focus is on reading. The complexity of the factors involved in literacy acquisition and development is borne out by the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) and other studies carried out both internationally and in South Africa. PIRLS is an outcome of the International Association for Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) which is newly-developed assessment of student's reading achievement at grade four.

To follow this up in more detail, the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) 2006 assessment is an international comparative study of reading literacy of Grade 4 learners which is undertaken in 5 year cycles. The aim of gathering background information was to describe accurately the learners being assessed in order to understand the factors at play that might influence their educational experiences. Together with descriptions of learners and their backgrounds, contextual information about educational settings and experiences can reveal striking differences as to how resources are distributed and utilised between different groups, or even provinces, of learners. Broadly listed, the educational areas addressed by the PIRLS 2006 contextual questionnaires include curriculum, learner characteristics and experiences, home/school connection, school environment, teacher characteristics, classroom resources and instructional practices. South Africa's poor performance in the PIRLS 2006 assessment highlights the need for teachers' continued professional development at Intermediate Phase, the need to employ strategies to retain young teachers and the importance of making available good quality reading materials to schools and the importance of increased time spent on reading activities and reading instruction in classrooms. To follow up the issues raised in the PIRLS Study, the teacher questionnaire used in my research probes the state of the school environment and resources, teacher

training and preparation, classroom environment and structure, instructional strategies, activities, materials and technology.

2.4 South Africa's overall reading achievement compared internationally

A total of 40 countries and 45 education systems participated in PIRLS 2006. The International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) released the PIRLS 2006 international reading literacy achievement results on 28 November 2007 at Boston College in the United States of America. The results provided overall reading averages achieved by each participating country. Internationally, PIRLS 2006 required the assessment of learners who had had four years of schooling, and for most countries this requirement translated to Grade 4 learners. The South African PIRLS 2006 study assessed this first population of Grade 4 learners, but also included a second population of Grade 5 learners as a national option included in the study. As can be seen in Figure 2.4, South Africa achieved the lowest score out of the 45 participating education systems. Figure 2.4 also indicates that the international report provides results only for South Africa's Grade 5 population. With an average age of 11.9 years, the South African learner population was the oldest across all participating countries. Grade 4 learners achieved on average 253 points while Grade 5 learners achieved on average 302. Average achievement for both these grades is well below the fixed international average of 500 points. Closest to South Africa in reading achievement was Morocco, the only other African country that participated in PIRLS 2006, with a Grade 4 average of 323 points.

2.5 South African studies in literacy acquisition and development

Education functions as an instrument to improve conformity to societal mores and transmit particular social values, especially in the acquisition and development of literacy (Tollenfoen, 1991). However, literature on literacy and its relationship to education has revealed complex problems in the classroom setting, particularly in primary education (Mati, Townsend & Versveld, 2001;

Simala, 2001; Street, 2001; Terblanche, 2009). Previous studies (Joseph, 2007; Webb, 2002) have tended to focus on classroom practices in literacy acquisition and development.

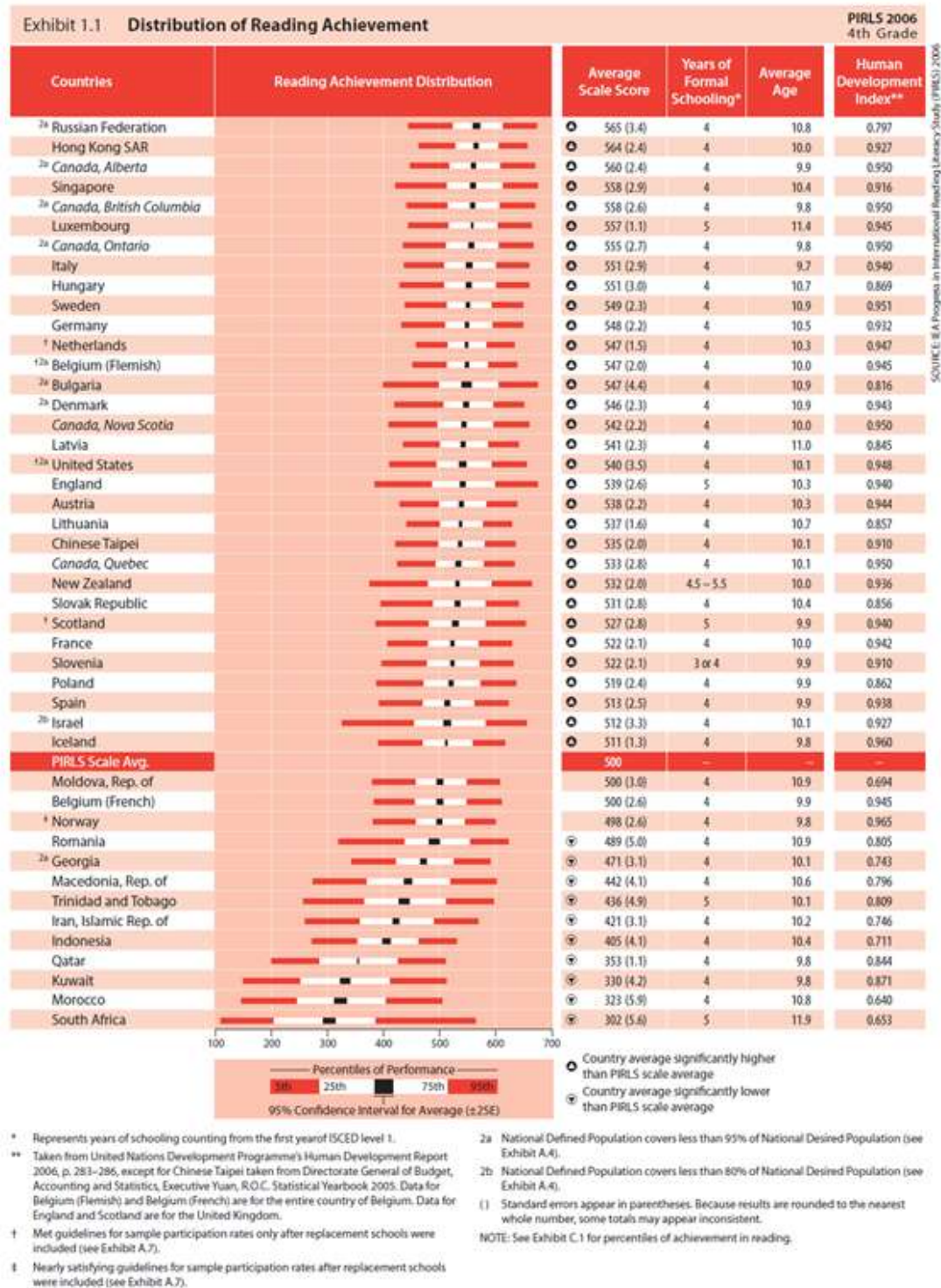


Figure 2.5 South Africa's rating in the PIRLS study (PIRLS 2006, p.37)

However, it must be noted that literacy is generally acknowledged to be a competence to be acquired rather than learned: consequently, “teaching” literacy may be viewed as a contradiction in terms (Gee, 1990; Street, 1996). Both Gee and Street emphasise that literacy practices must be contextualised in their social context. For this reason, aspects other than actual classroom practice will be included in this study, in particular, how various contextual issues, such as government legislation, educational policies, community involvement in schools, and other local factors impact on the process.

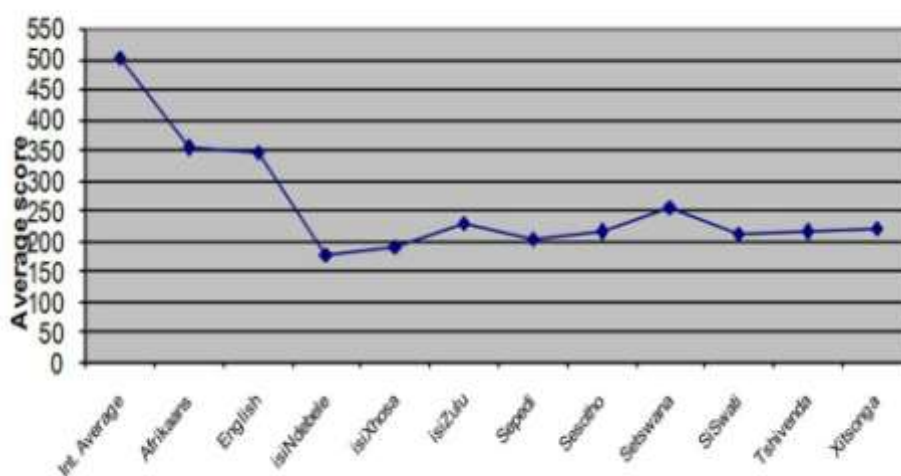


Figure 2.6 Average achievements according to language for Grade 4 (Mullis *et al.*, 2004)

The South African PIRLS Study, undertaken in 2006 on reading assessment, was administered to a sample of 16 073 Grade 4 learners in all 11 official languages in South Africa (Howie & van Staden, 2007). It has to be kept in mind that the results for each language are in terms of the language of the test, and not the learners’ home language. Average achievement scores that are provided here per language are therefore for learners who completed the assessment in the language of the test (i.e. the language of instruction for the first three years of schooling), which may therefore be different from the learner’s home language. Figure 2.5 indicates that the learners who wrote the PIRLS 2006 assessment in Afrikaans achieved the highest average score of 351.70, closely followed by learners who completed the assessment in English

(346.82). Learners who completed the assessment in African languages achieved well below 300 points, with Setswana learners having achieved the highest scores, while IsiNdebele and IsiXhosa learners achieved the lowest average scores at 176.80 and 189.97 respectively. It must be noted that all South African achievement scores were well below the international average of 500 points.

2.6 Teachers' Instructional Practices

The section relates to how teachers experience developing literacy competences in the classroom. In the light of dismally low reading achievement scores for Grade 4 learners, further interrogation is needed into teacher characteristics, use of resources and instructional practices. Teachers of the South African sample of Grade 4 learners completed the PIRLS 2006 Teacher Questionnaire. According to Howie *et al.* (2007), these teachers had on average 15 years of teaching experience, and, more specifically, had on average 6 years of Grade 4 teaching experience. In terms of gender, Grade 4 learners are taught by a majority of female teachers at 84.19% with the remaining 15.81% of the sample having been made up of male teachers. It is a matter of concern that, for the South African teacher profiles of Grade 4 learners, there is a very small percentage of young up-and-coming teachers. Only 1% of learners were taught by teachers aged under 25 years, with only another 4% of learners being taught by teachers between the ages of 25 to 29 years (see Table 4.2). While teacher-student numbers are ample at a few tertiary teacher education institutions across South Africa, the incidence of high teacher attrition rates is problematic. Some (usually white) young teachers prefer to leave South Africa for more lucrative teaching positions overseas, or merely choose to leave the profession after only a short period of teaching.

The average achievements for Grade 4 learners taught by teachers under the age of 25 years (461) and teachers over the age of 60 years (432) were higher than the average achievement obtained for any other groups of learners based on their teachers' ages (Howie *et al.*, 2007). Two groups of youngest and oldest teachers, whose Grade 4 learners achieved the highest average scores,

represent the smallest percentages of Grade 4 teachers for this sample, a matter of some concern. Larger percentages of teachers in the remaining age groups achieved the lowest average achievement on the PIRLS 2006 assessment.

South African children develop reading skills such as decoding strategies and understanding vocabulary during the Foundation Phase (Grades 1 to 3). According to Pretorius (2002), the Intermediate Phase (Grades 4 to 6) affords learners the opportunity to use reading as a language and information processing skill, as learners are largely expected to be able to decode text. At Grade 4 learners should also begin the switch from learning the lower level skills involved in learning to read, and to adapting those skills in order to use reading as a tool to learn. 25% of Grade 4 learners in the PIRLS 2006 report have teachers who engage them daily in decoding strategies, compared to 69% of teachers of Grade 4 learners internationally. In terms of time allocated to reading activities in the classroom, more than half the Grade 4 learners (61%) had teachers who reported reading aloud to the whole class every day or almost every day. For these learners this reading is the most prominent activity listed by teachers. Of concern is the fact that reading aloud to the class is a teacher-centred rather than learner-centred approach, where learners are involved passively only and where the teacher assumes that learners are able to follow along and understand what is being read. Also of concern are the low frequencies at which learners are afforded the opportunity to read independently. Indeed 7% of teachers to Grade 4 learners indicated that the learners never - or almost never - engage in independent reading in class, with only 27% reporting reading independently as little as once or twice a month (Howie *et al.*, 2007).

2.7 Conclusions and Implications of the South African PIRLS Study

This section is relevant to Research questions 1, 2 and 3, as is concerned with literacy acquisition development, underlying social factors, and teacher training. South African Grade 4 learner achievement in the PIRLS 2006 assessment

accentuates the need for reading instruction practices aimed at addressing the difficulties South African learners encounter in both the Foundation and Intermediate Phases. As stated in the International Reading Association's synthesis on their research into teacher preparation for reading instruction "putting a quality teacher in every classroom is the key to addressing the challenges of reading achievement in schools. Knowledgeable, strategic, adaptive and reflective teachers make a difference in student learning" (Mullis, Kennedy, Martin & Sainsbury, 2004; Umalusi and Centre for Education and Policy Development Series, CEPD, 2007).

The teacher data presented in this paper indicate the need for the continuous professional development of Intermediate Phase teachers. This is because the low overall achievement scores of Grade 4 learners, linked to teacher qualifications, suggest that these teachers have not been adequately prepared to teach reading literacy. Campbell, Kelly, Mullis, Martin and Sainsbury (2001) state that PIRLS focuses on three aspects of reading literacy namely: reading behaviours and attitudes, process of comprehension and purposes for reading. Processes of comprehension refer to ways in which readers construct meaning from text. Readers focus on and retrieve specific ideas, make inferences, interpret and integrate information, while also examining the text features. On the other hand, purposes for reading refers to two types of reading that account for most of the reading young learners do, namely reading for literary experience and reading to acquire and use information. Subsequent sections of this document will pay particular attention to the types of reading comprehension and the purposes for reading found in the PIRLS 2006 assessment. Reading behaviours and attitudes refer to those behaviours and attitudes that would promote lifelong reading habits.

Both the International and South African PIRLS studies have major gaps, as only Grade 4 learners from the Intermediate phase were researched. It is significant to note also that only one area of literacy was investigated, neglecting Grade 5 and 6. It is hoped that this study will go some way towards filling in these gaps, as this research involves an investigation into literacy acquisition and development in Grades 4, 5 and 6. The following are five areas

of importance highlighted by Simmons and Kameenui (2000) with regard to literacy and which have implications for the match between the child's literacy background and classroom instructions to which the child is exposed:

- 1) the experiences with print that help preschool children develop an understanding of the conventions and functions of print.
- 2) the use of language and how children learn how to use it by interacting with others who model language functions.
- 3) phonological awareness and letter recognition, which contribute to initial acquisition in adopting appropriate reading strategies.
- 4) the child's socio economic status, which in itself does not contribute most directly to reading achievement, but that, is rather a function of the family characteristics related to context such as attitude toward education, conversations in the home and reading materials available in the home.
- 5) storybook reading in particular, specifically the nature of child-adult interactions around the story which affect children's knowledge about and strategies for reading.

The following concerns are consistently reflected in research:

- the development of basic literacy skills at the foundation levels of education (Bloch, 1999; Lessing & de Witt, 2005);
- the acquisition of more advanced literacy skills in high school (Matjila & Pretorius, 2004; Pretorius & Ribbens, 2005);
- the development of advanced literate language skills needed for tertiary level education (Pretorius, 2002).

In analysing the PIRLS study, it is vital to stress that reading is a fundamental part of literacy acquisition and development in primary education. PIRLS was solely based on the reading aspect; therefore this study did shed some light on my research, as these findings have relevance for primary education in South Africa. The fact that the South African results were the lowest rated in this study indicates that there is a major problem in the Intermediate Phase in primary education. It is hoped that the current study will fill some gaps in this

area, specifically in the acquisition and development of literacy, as well as the role of teacher training and support. This study also explores other gaps and grey areas; for instance in South Africa there are major problems in the Intermediate phase, such as the lack of functional libraries, inadequate teacher training, and outdated materials.

On 30 August 2007 a seminar held by Umalusi Council debated issues concerning public schooling and improving quality of schooling in South Africa. Speakers such as Jansen, Pampallis, and Fleisch (2007) shed some light on literacy acquisition in the following ways:

- Literacy acquisition at school level is a burning issue that the government needs to prioritise.
- It is not about the amount of resources e.g. reading materials are not being turned out into results.
- There should be a moratorium on the generation and pursuit of new educational policies, because since 1994 these new policies have not impacted on the quality of education especially in literacy and numeracy.
- In 2005 a Department of Education Intermediate phase Systemic Evaluation established that six out of ten learners were not able to attain a minimum standard in literacy, that is, were not able to score 50% or more in a Grade 6 assessment task.
- Between 2004 and 2005 Grade 3 literacy results showed 0.9% improvement in schools, and as little as 12.9% of learners achieved a basic level of literacy. Very few S.A learners acquire literacy skills that are required at school level in order to succeed at universities.

At the Umalusi Seminar Dr Lolwana stressed that the problem of low literacy was wide in scope, but that it was important to zoom into the classroom and focus on the teacher. OBE was referred to as “a political football” (Umalusi, 2007), showing that education is a political as well as a pedagogical issue. Literacy skills are essential for the success of OBE and the government has given little substantive training to teachers to address the real problems in the classrooms. Curriculum is an important vehicle for good quality education but

effective pedagogy is also one of the important conditions which support literacy acquisition and development, as teachers need to frame progression of this knowledge. Good education happens in the classroom, yet this is the “black box” in the education system. Literacy and numeracy need to become the foundations upon which cognitive skills are developed. Teacher training and support and the continued development of teacher professionalism need to be prioritised (Machet & Pretorius, 2004). Attention to literacy acquisition must not be ad hoc, but purposeful and addressing that which matters in the classroom. Teacher training is crucial, and it is necessary to ensure that teachers have adequate disciplinary knowledge and pedagogical skills, particularly in literacy (UNESCO, 2006). It is not sufficient to have insights into the depths of these crises: the focus must also be on identifying the causes of learner under-performance. Literacy itself is a vital issue, but there are even more complex issues underlying these problems. Hence my research intervention may fill in the gaps of what happens in the classroom and the factors which might impact on classroom practice. In connection with the latter, government legislation will be considered next, in terms of its relation to implementation of literacy policy.

2.8 South Africa’s development in language policy

This section relates to government literacy policies, how these are implemented in practice and the results on the learners’ performance. It also comments in passing on how teachers experience the development of literacy competences in the classroom, which is mainly by instructional practice. A review of the language policies which have been imposed by various governments of South Africa over the years will confirm that language policies have influenced our past, and will continue to influence our future in education (De Kerk, 1995). Most important is the issue of how such policies can be implemented in the classroom. In the complex, interdependent and increasingly crowded South Africa we live in, planning is a critical feature of human existence. Language planning in its larger or macro sense is an aspect of national resource development planning. Language planning is generally defined as an intervention intended to influence language or language use, and is a deliberate effort to influence the behaviour of others with respect to the acquisition,

structure and development of literacy (Blommaert, 1996). From a language planning perspective it is necessary to determine the linguistic knowledge and skills necessary for acquiring and developing the knowledge, understanding and skills which learners are expected to acquire and develop during school.

This review deals with the aim and overview of the development of the current language policy, which is based on three vital concerns:

- development of the language policy;
- language planning, with its tasks and challenges;
- language policy development (which is still in the process of evaluation).

National ideals are expressed in the founding provisions of the SA language policy (De Kerk, 1995) , which aims at:

- establishing democracy
- promoting equality and human rights
- developing the people of the country
- implementing affirmative action
- administering the country effectively
- developing national integration, and promoting mutual tolerance and respect among the different cultural, linguistic, religious, racial and socio-political groups
- retaining the country's cultural diversity

The development of the language policy (and thus achievement of the above ideals) rests on two-language policy strategies (i.e. such as those documented in the Constitution, with its language stipulations) and the proposed SA Languages Bill. In South Africa a pilot study in primary education in Foundation Phase (Grade 3) was conducted in 2000. The report contains the first major baseline study on the state of our schooling system. It establishes empirically-based benchmarks on the performance of our system on a number of key criteria. In terms of the arithmetic mean, student achievement in the three Foundation Phase learning programmes of Literacy, Life Skills and Numeracy (Finding 1) stood at 54%, 54% and 30% respectively. A disaggregation of the

Literacy results indicates that learners performed differently in the two components of Literacy, namely, listening comprehension, and reading and writing. The average achievement for listening comprehension was 68%, while it was 39% for reading and writing. The curriculum does not explicitly mention the need for students to know how to read and write. The performance trends in literacy and numeracy shown by this study are similar to trends in many developed countries. Given the high rate of participation of children in the Foundation Phase and the legacy of deprivation bequeathed to us by apartheid, the results are not as alarming as some might want to make out. However, literacy cannot be presented as *fait accompli* to learners who might not be accustomed to reading at home. It appears that many learners have numerous problems with literacy skills (Aarnoutse & Schellings, 2003; Van Keer, 2004): good readers employ different cognitive and meta-cognitive strategies before, during and after reading of a text, whereas poor readers do not plan their reading sufficiently. Research further indicates that teaching of reading strategies for developing comprehension is the exception rather than the rule. The instructional practice of teaching reading in primary schools is still the traditional model, and involves hardly any explicit and continuous instruction aimed at making learners astute in selection and evaluation (Block, 2001; Christie, Enz & Vukelich, 2003).

2.9 Teacher Training

Primary education is the most crucial stage in the life of a learner because it is at this stage that foundational learning and literacy skills are developed. Quality classroom teaching has the most influence on successful outcomes for learners (Ball & Kenny, 1990). Best practices and strategies are about processes that support quality education, including well-trained teachers who continually engage in professional learning and development; well-managed, learner friendly and gender-fair classrooms and schools; skills-based, learner-centred participatory methods; skilful assessment to facilitate learning; and appropriate technologies (Compendium on Quality in Basic Education, 2003). Children should be taught in languages they understand and through which they can learn. Teaching practices should be based on the belief that all learners can

learn. It is therefore important for educators in this phase to have training and insight into how learners need to acquire these skills, as this can affect the learner's progress at school as well as have long term social consequences (Levacic, 1995). International and local research also suggests that resources play a vital role in primary education. In South Africa many schools lack resources, as confirmed by Kader (2003), when he commented on the lack of resources available to implement outcomes-based education. There is developing literature dealing with issues of teachers' professional identities, including the hidden side of teachers' work, improving teacher qualifications, and confronting the crisis in teacher training. Teachers are a key component of our education system and therefore it is imperative to support them and capacitate them with the best training available. In the last two to three decades teachers' training and support have been plagued by problems locally and internationally (Karlsson, McPherson & Pampallis, 2001). The problems include growing dissatisfaction of teachers about their working conditions, which are characterised by large class sizes, heavy work load, low salaries, and inadequate training and resources. There are many gaps in the literature with regard to the acquisition of literacy, as well as to teaching and support, and this study may contribute in some measure to these areas. The researcher believes that all learners should be able to reach their full potential and that educators should ensure that learners leave school with an acceptable level of literacy, which presently is not the case for far too many learners in South Africa.

There are numerous concerns about the development of learners' literacy skills in South Africa which drive research into the acquisition and development teaching and learning. These concerns are consistently reflected in local research (Fleish, 2007), relating to:

- development of basic literacy skills at the foundational levels of education (Morrell, 2004; Pretorius, 2002)
- acquisition of more advanced literacy skills in high school (Mati, Townsend & Versveld, 2001; Ribbens & Pretorius, 2005)

- development of the advanced literate language skills needed for tertiary level education (Machet & Pretorius, 2004) are consistently reflected in local research (Fleish, 2007).

With regard to school related factors impacting on the reading achievement of learners, Fleish (2007) reports a number of factors specifically related to teachers in South African classrooms. These factors include inadequate subject knowledge of teachers, inadequate communication ability between learners and teachers in the language of instruction, lack of instructional materials, difficulties teachers have managing classroom activities effectively, and overcrowded classrooms. These factors are highlighted by the Department of Education (see Van Keer, 2004) in its evaluation of schools which promote literacy learning in low-income communities. The factors are also found in the work of a number of researchers who identified common themes across effective schools, themes which could guide reform efforts in those failing schools operating in resource-poor environments (Soudien, 2008; Umalusi and Centre for Education and Policy Development Series, CEPD, 2007). The common themes in these schools which influenced learner achievement positively included the following: a clear school mission, effective instructional leadership and practices, high expectations for learners to achieve and perform at their best, a safe, orderly, positive physical environment, ongoing curriculum improvement, maximum use of available instructional time, frequent monitoring of learner progress and positive home-school connections.

Following their work on high achieving schools from low-income environments in a sample of South African primary schools, Ribbens and Pretorius (2005) identified their own set of themes and factors which seemed to impact positively on learner achievement. Dovetailing with the work of other researchers, they cite the presence of a safe, orderly positive learning environment as having a positive influence on learner achievement. Another factor identified is the presence of strong leadership which guides the school in terms of academic guidance, community relations and shared decision making. In describing teachers as “excellent”, a third factor is identified which impacts on learner achievement positively, that is where teachers are characterised as committed,

competent, caring and collaborative. A fourth identified factor is that of a shared sense of competence, pride and purpose in schools which function effectively in low-income communities. Lastly, community participation and engagement with the school constitute factors associated with higher achievement among learners. Classroom teaching for reading instruction needs to be considered as the critical factor in preventing reading problems and must be the central focus for change (Moats, 1999). As such, teachers' acquisition of the teaching skills necessary to bring about the development of literate language competency are critical (Shanahan, 2007), especially as in South Africa many assumptions have been largely unquestioned about how to teach reading and writing, which languages to use, and what counts as high quality practice in classrooms (Diko & Akoojee, 2009). Bloch (1999) emphasises that the requirements for the development of reading fluency necessitate that teachers as well as curriculum developers determine what instructional options are available to them and how to go about the optimal pursuit of instructional goals in various contexts.

South Africa's PIRLS 2006 study shows that the highest percentage of South African learners (41%) was taught by teachers with a three-year college diploma. Of these learners, 60% was taught by teachers with a teaching certification from the former teacher training colleges or were in possession of a post-matric certificate (Howie *et al.*, 2007). A little over 14 % of learners had language teachers reported to have postgraduate degrees; these learners achieved a higher average compared to those learners whose teachers had no postgraduate qualifications.

2.9.1 The state of teacher professionalism in South Africa

Teachers are an important element of any education system and therefore the nature of their work is an important area of study. Identifying what preparation teachers received for developing literacy competences might then feed into the recommendations given for teacher training and support. In the last two to three decades teachers' work has been plagued by problems internationally. The problems include growing dissatisfaction of teachers about their working conditions, characterised by heavy workloads and low salaries, the growing attempts by governments to control teachers' work in the wake of globalisation

and the accompanying discourse of managerialism, as well as the increasing negative public image of the teaching profession. The media has perpetuated the negative public image of teaching by engaging in teacher “bashing” and by generalising about teachers whenever a few teachers behave in an unacceptable manner. The negative public image of teaching is manifested in the failure of the profession to attract enough students and the fact that many of those who are already in the profession want to leave. As a Senior Trainer at Ikhwezi College of Education I am well aware of these symptoms.

2.9.2 Teacher training and support

To enhance the instruction in literacy learning, there is need for effective teacher-training and support (Lalleman, 1996). The ideal training, among other things should expose teachers to a variety of current literacy acquisition methods and theories (Musau, 1999). It appears that many learners have numerous problems with literacy skills. Good readers employ different cognitive and meta-cognitive strategies before, during and after reading of a text, whereas poor readers do not plan their reading sufficiently (Aarnoutse & Schellings, 2003; Van Keer, 2004). Research further indicates that teaching of reading strategies for developing comprehension is the exception rather than the rule. The instructional practice of teaching reading in primary schools is still very traditional and hardly any explicit and continuous instruction is used which aims at making learners astute in selection and evaluation of reading materials (Block, 2001; Christie, Enz & Vukelich, 2003).

It is generally acknowledged that Primary Education is the most crucial stage in the life of a learner, because learning and developing literacy skills are essential for learners to continue to develop throughout their schooling. While classroom practice is not the only factor involved in literacy acquisition and development, as Ball and Kenny’s (1990) study shows, it is quality classroom teaching which has the most influence on successful outcomes for learners. Best practices and strategies are about processes that support quality education, and require the following for successful implementation: well-trained teachers who continually engage in professional learning and development; well-managed, learner-friendly and gender-fair classrooms and schools; skills-based, learner-centred

and participatory methods; skilful assessment to facilitate learning; and appropriate technologies (Compendium on Quality in Basic Education, 2003). It is therefore important for educators in this phase to have training and insight into how learners need to acquire these skills as this can affect the learner's progress at school as well as have long term social consequences (Levacic, 1995).

International and local research also suggests that resources play a vital role in primary education. In South Africa many schools lack resources, as commented on by Kader (2003), who asks: "How can outcomes-based education be implemented without libraries in our schools?" There is developing literature dealing with issues of teachers' professional identities, the hidden side of teachers' work, building a better teacher, and confronting the crisis in teacher training, amongst other topics. The problems include growing dissatisfaction of teachers about their working conditions, which are characterised by large class sizes, heavy work load, low salaries and inadequate training and resources.

With regard to this study, there are gaps in the literature with regards to acquisition of literacy, and teaching and support, according to Green (2008). There are also gaps in other key areas, notably how policy impacts on actual classroom practice in the case of the switch from indigenous mother tongue instruction to English in Grade 4. In the latter case, the preference of parents for model C type instruction in English from Grade 3 can result in a conflict between parental wishes and policy, and can result in the policy not achieving the desired outcome.

The policies are in tension with the reality on the ground where teachers are inadequately prepared and do not conceptualise themselves in the sophisticated terms reflected in the policies. The policies presuppose highly trained and autonomous teachers who see themselves as partners in policy making rather than mere implementers of policy. Various studies have shown that South African teachers are not only inadequately trained, but that they do not see themselves as policy formulators. The new policies have also resulted in policy overload and intensification of teachers' work. Curriculum 2005, for

instance, has resulted in more paper work for teachers. The intensification of teachers' work has in turn resulted in low morale among teachers and loss of confidence in their abilities. There is overwhelming evidence that teachers' work in South Africa is increasingly characterised by intensification. The policy overload has manifested itself through the proliferation of workshops and increased changes that teachers have to deal with. This has caused confusion and in some cases loss of confidence by some teachers. The impressive policy framework that has been put in place has not been backed by support and a comprehensive plan of how the policies are going to be implemented. Teachers are not provided with adequate support and professional development.

The importance of teacher development cannot be overstated, given the reality that most of our teachers were trained under the apartheid system which did not encourage professional autonomy and the involvement of teachers in policy matters. The conditions in which some teachers are working are also characterised by inadequate infrastructure and high level of violence. Various authors have argued that governments are increasing monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, without, however, providing sufficient support for teachers. Some argue that the only moral basis on which governments can demand accountability from teachers is through providing constant support. Without such support, demand for accountability can be seen as morally questionable. Some of the teacher development and support programmes are not conceptualised *with* teachers but are instead imposed *on* teachers. Change experts like Fullan (2001) have pointed out that change is difficult if those who are expected to effect change are excluded from taking part in the conceptualisation.

Teachers themselves have been found to have a negative image of the teaching profession and they tend to discourage learners from becoming professional teachers. In other words, some teachers are not proud to be associated with teaching and are not committed to its ideals. The image of the teaching profession can improve only if teachers themselves work hard to improve it. African teachers tend to have a negative image of their profession, partly because apartheid policies marginalized them, and partly because society

tends to have a negative image of the profession in general. This is compounded by the negative public images of teaching that are portrayed in the media and the unacceptable behaviour of some teachers (Serrao, 2010).

2.10 Conclusion

This chapter has emphasised that literacy acquisition and development are foundation skills that should develop throughout a learner's time at school, because they are tools for further learning. The researcher believes it is crucial that primary education should have a firm foundation in acquisition of literacy because a literate population contributes to a nation's social and economic health. Hence the ability to read and write is essential for personal growth for all involved in primary education. It is hoped that this study will generate new knowledge on literacy acquisition and the instruments created may be useful for literacy acquisition research in developing countries. The findings will inform language and education policy decisions and instructional and reading materials at school. Literacy is not seen as some simple technical achievement, but as the index of the transformation of culture, cognition that entails development of an external supplement to memory. Becoming literate entails a set of powerful and effective mental strategies, some of which, to the cost of learners, have become attenuated and undervalued in significant parts of our culture, educational system, and literacy teaching: "literacy unlocked a variety of doors, but it did not necessarily secure admission" (Cressy, 1980). More focus must be given to the work of literacy acquisition and development by increasing teacher content knowledge and their knowledge of how learners learn in this area, along with the teaching practice most likely to create conditions for success. According to Hattie (2009) quality classroom teaching has the most influence on successful outcomes for learners therefore it is important to investigate teachers' experiences and training needs.

In view of the key themes of government policy implementation, the perceived effects on learner performance, and the importance teacher of competence at facilitating LAD, research questions 1a, b, c and 3 were formulated to guide this inquiry. As the literature made it clear that all kinds of social factors impacted (negatively and positively) on LAD, and that it was not just a question of

individual performance, question 2 was included in an attempt to identify key social mechanisms which might impact on LAD.

Research questions:

1. In terms of the practice of literacy acquisition and development:
 - a. How are government literacy policies implemented in practice (i.e. at classroom level)?
 - b. How do learners experience the acquisition and development of literacy in the classroom?
 - c. How do teachers experience developing literacy competences in the classroom?
 - d. What preparation (if any) did they receive for developing literacy competences?
2. What underlying social factors can be seen to impact on the practice of literacy acquisition and development?
3. What recommendations for teacher training and support are suggested by the answers to the above questions?

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH ORIENTATION

“Philosophy easily triumphs over past ills and ills to come, but present ills triumph over Philosophy” (Maxims of La Rochefoucauld, 1613-1680, in Tancock, 1959).

3.1 Introduction

This chapter investigates the philosophical orientation underpinning this research in order to present a firm basis for this study, and in order is to establish the researcher’s position. The research approach to literacy acquisition and development is based on Bhaskar’s philosophy of critical realism (Bhaskar, 1978, 1986). The chapter starts by giving an overview of critical realism and its relevance to this study. It then goes on to look in more detail at the various key elements of the philosophy, showing how these relate to the key issues in this thesis, in particular, how various causal factors might impact both positively and negatively on the teaching and learning processes involved in literacy acquisition and development. Social structures (Thiederman, 2008) such as government, the School Governing Body and the teacher training body are factors which are likely to be implicated in literacy acquisition. Moreover, this chapter will explain the focus on social factors which are probed in research question 2, namely what underlying social factors can be seen to impact on the practice of literacy acquisition and development. It will also suggest that critical realism is a suitable orientation because it enables the researcher not only to deal with the symptoms but also to probe the underlying causes of the current literacy crisis (Nkomo, 2010). Thus solutions might be found to address the root causes and not the symptoms of the problem. It will be shown that the critical realist viewpoint is well matched with how the researcher views reality, and makes it possible to look beyond the surface into the depth processes of literacy acquisition and development. Finally, it will be shown that critical realism shows social processes as involving complex layers, referred to as the stratification.

3.2 Overview of critical realism

Critical realism refers to a position that maintains that there exists an independently knowable, mind-independent reality, while acknowledging the roles of perception and cognition. Critical realism is relevant to numerous schools of thought, and has gained acknowledgment within the discourse of social sciences chiefly in Geography, Economics, Organizational Theory and Sociology. In recent years it has attracted interest in the fields of Applied Linguistics and Linguistics (Archer, Bhaskar, Collier, Lawson & Norrie, 1998; Collier, 1994; Lopez & Potter, 2001; Pratt, 2007; Sayer, 2000). Critical realism is a philosophy developed by Roy Bhaskar (2008), with significant contributions, however, having been made by Rom Harré (1979) and Margaret Archer (2002). The critical realist agrees that our knowledge of reality is a result of social conditioning and thus cannot be understood independently of the social factors involved in the knowledge derivation process. However, critical realists would take issue with the belief that the reality itself is a product of this knowledge derivation process (i.e. as in social constructivism). The critical realist asserts that the subjects of observation (even if the former is value-laden) are real objects. The reality and the value-laden observation of reality operate in two different dimensions, one intransitive (Bhaskar, 1989) and relatively enduring, the other transitive (Bhaskar, 1986) and changing.

Bhaskar (1986) argues that a lack of recognition of this division is a fundamental error of much of postmodernist work. Bhaskar's brand of realism, referred to by Searle (1995) as "external realism", holds that there exists a reality totally independent of our representations of it; the reality and the representation of reality operate in different domains - roughly a transitive epistemological dimension and an intransitive ontological dimension. For the realist, the most important driver for decisions on methodological approach is always the intransitive dimension, the aim being to unearth the real mechanisms and structures underlying perceived events. A key issue for this study is that social mechanisms and social structures, although they can be transformed with time, are as much an enduring feature of the educational landscape as the physical infrastructure (Fleetwood, 2005). This is the context

of the “literacy crisis” identified in earlier chapters, and, unless there is some insight into the ways in which these mechanisms and structures impact on and influence literacy acquisition and development, there is little hope for positive change.

The researcher has noted a tendency in educational policy to ignore the underlying problems inherent in the social setting in which literacy acquisition and development occur, and to make a series of ad hoc adjustments based on a surface view of events. For example, when it was perceived that South African learners lacked basic reading competences, it was assumed that this was because learners lacked suitable reading materials. The focus was therefore on providing more books in school libraries, rather than looking at - and redressing, or compensating for - social factors which might be found to cause the deficit in reading competences. Bhaskar’s critical realism emphasises the complex, layered and dynamic nature of reality, including social reality, which makes it a suitable orientation for probing the causes of social phenomena. It is congruent with the researcher’s brief, which is to identify key social structures and mechanisms impacting on literacy acquisition and development with a view to how these might affect teaching/learning practices. The motif of stratification re-occurs in Bhaskar’s philosophy, both in the nature of reality itself and the view of reality unfolding to the researcher/s in the course of investigating phenomena. The key features of critical realism touched on in this overview will be explicated in more detail in the sections below, as well as their relevance to the various aspects of this study. The complex layering of Bhaskar’s ontology provides the philosophical and methodological justification for this study in showing literacy acquisition as a social process involving complex layers of causality. However, a philosophy is sound only if it guides tangible research practices (Bhaskar, 1979), in this case those applied to investigating a priori schooling structures which underpin the social process of literacy acquisition and development in a rural school, a semi-urban school, and an ex-model C school.

This study breaks away from the more usual postmodern approaches which have dominated the field for the last twenty years in adopting a critical realist

approach. Critical realism is a complex philosophy which is gaining ground in the social sciences, but so far not many literacy studies have been conducted within this orientation (Archer, 2002; Fairclough, Jessop & Sayer, 2001; Pratt, 2007). In Chapter Four and Five the framework is elaborated extensively with a combination of the research questions, themes, data and methods in relation to critical realism. This study explores implications of a critical realist perspective for the field of literacy acquisition and development that is uniquely positioned to provide an antidote to the problems besetting contemporary literacy acquisition research. This critical realist standpoint goes beyond education research, indicating the conception of education as an emancipatory enterprise. Critical realism is an immensely intelligent and challenging development in the philosophy of social science (Baehr, 1990). It raises significant challenges to dominant views of literacy pedagogy and praxis in education and further explores an overview of the canons of critical realism as a philosophy for this study.

3.3 Bhaskar’s ontology

The concept of ontological stratification is fundamental to critical realism, and stands as one of its most important contribution to philosophy (Madill & Jordan, 2000). Bhaskar’s argument for the stratification of nature is based on his notion of “depth realism” established in three domains, as illustrated in Table 3.1 below (Bhaskar, 2008, p.2).

Table 3.1 Bhaskar’s three domains

	Domain of Real	Domain of Actual	Domain of Empirical
Mechanisms	✓		
Events	✓	✓	
Experiences	✓	✓	✓

Our knowledge of events and objects occupies the domain of the empirical, in that they represent our experiences. Our experiences also have an “actual” (as well as mental) reality, and, together with events, occupy the domain of the

actual. The domain of the real houses the intransitive objects of reality (i.e. not the objects of human thought), which comprise mechanisms, events and experiences. Generative mechanisms are the tendencies of objects to behave in a certain way, and they “combine to generate the flux of phenomena that constitute the actual states and happenings of the world” (Bhaskar, 2008, p.37). “Happenings” are events that take place irrespective of our perception or knowledge of them, yet some are experienced. Bhaskar (2008; 1979) argues, in reaction to positivist experimentation with closed systems, that reality is stratified and layered, a complex open system where objects, and indeed generative mechanisms, inter(re)act, enabling or inhibiting the outcome or event. Morgan (2004) clarifies that events are variable and systems are open precisely because given causal powers may not be activated or may be offset by others or may act in combination in a way that they do not in other combinations or alone. The event is itself the result of emergent generative mechanisms within a specific context.

Critical realist research involves an understanding and explanation of the generative mechanisms at play within a given context. This can be achieved through an analysis of the emergent properties of the enduring mechanisms. “The aim of realist research is to develop a better understanding of these enduring structures and mechanisms” (Dobson, 2001, p.10). Bhaskar characterises science as “concerned with both taxonomic and explanatory knowledge: with what kinds of things there are, as well as how the things there are behave (Bhaskar, 2008, p.8). Carlsson (2003) develops the leitmotif “perspicuity of explanation” in characterising critical realism as an attempt to understand the social world through the identification of the structures at work in the events and discourses we experience. Bhaskar’s transcendental argument suggests a retroduction from an unexplained phenomenon to a hypothesis about a mechanism which might be present to generate it (Bhaskar, 2008). The process creates understanding through clarifying explanations of the underlying structures and mechanisms that co-determine a contextualised empirical outcome. Bhaskar explains this schema of scientific development as follows:

Typically, then, the construction of an explanation for, that is the production of the knowledge of the mechanism of the production

of, some unidentified phenomenon which *if* it were to exist and act in the postulated way would account for the phenomenon in question (a movement of thought which may be styled “retroduction”) (Bhaskar, 1979, p.15).

Explanation is important for the critical realist researcher, as it is through clarifying, refining and developing (social) scientific explanations that theory is itself advanced. Bhaskar argues that science does not amount to the gathering of facts, but rather concerns itself with the “understanding of the different mechanisms of the production of phenomena in nature” (Bhaskar, 2008, p.153). Such explanations constitute one of two kinds of science work:

...practical (experimental and technical) work, in which the scientist’s causal and perceptual powers are augmented (the latter with the aid of the construction of sense-extending equipment, such as microscopes); and theoretical work, in which the scientist’s conceptual and descriptive powers are augmented. It is the aim of the former to produce the object, i.e. to render the thing or behaviour directly accessible to the scientist’s senses (so that it becomes the possible object of an act of immediate demonstrative reference). And it is the aim of the latter to produce the concept of the object, so that the scientist is capable of an adequate description of it (Bhaskar, 2008, p.169).

Bhaskar’s realist ontology is complex and layered, and therefore different from the realism of positivism, which relies on accumulated sense-data. Irwin (1997) states that stratification is a recurring motif in critical realism, which applies in:

- the layers of complex causality which lead to the emergence of natural and social phenomena; and
- emergent human knowledge, which can be seen to unfold over time in progressive layers of depth perception, and is always in a state of development (Irwin, 1997).

As Pratt points out:

Reality is not viewed as a fixed and closed system, but as open-ended, always in a state of becoming, and, while subject to the interaction of powerful and complex mechanisms (underlying causes of events), it is capable of generating novel phenomena and even of developing further mechanisms over time (2007, p.29).

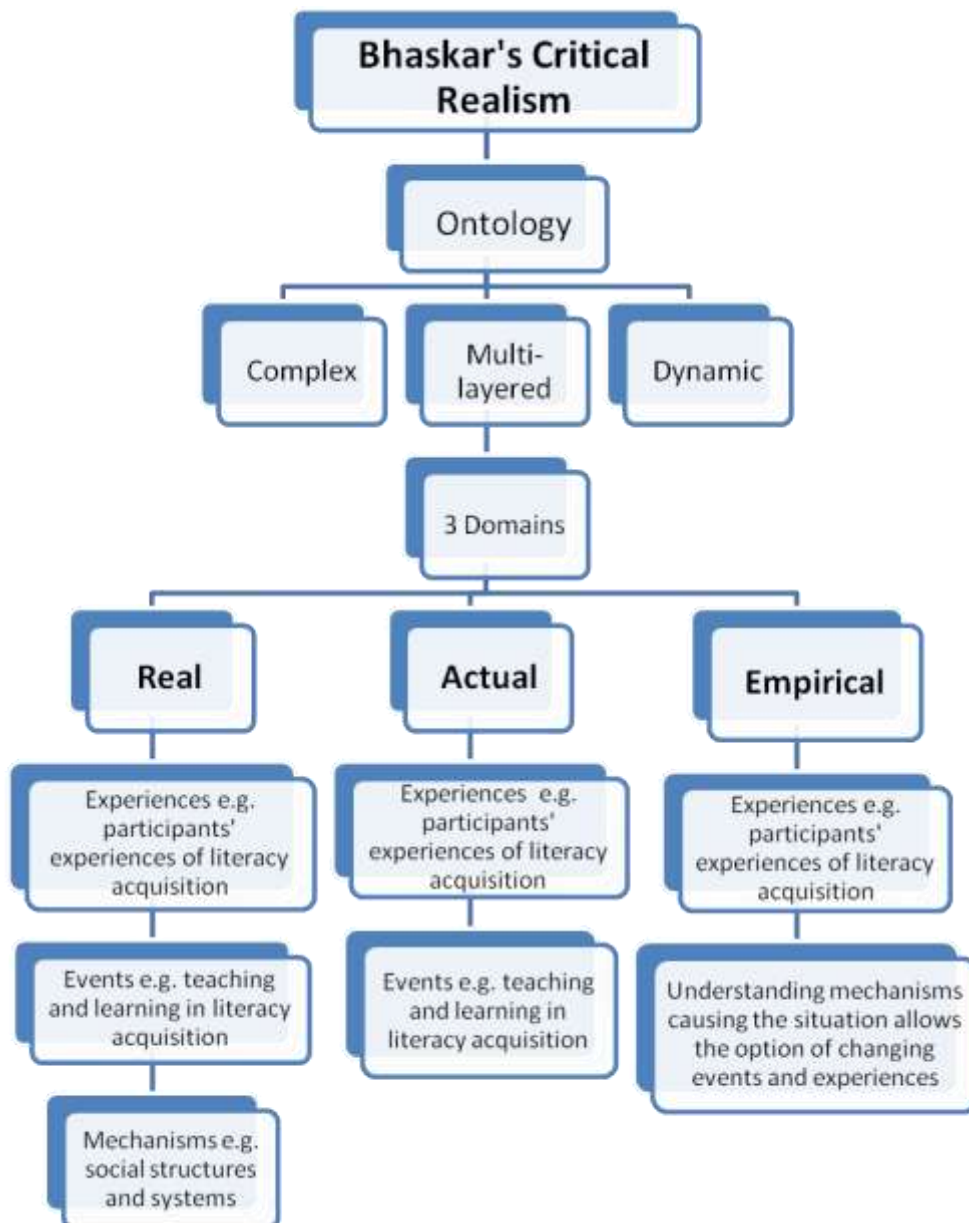


Figure 3.1 Bhaskar's domains (1978, p.12) and the "reality" of literacy acquisition

Bhaskar's ontology has direct relevance for this research in suggesting the hitherto hidden dimensions involved in literacy acquisition and development, as modelled in Figure 3.1. Bhaskar's ontology allows the researcher to make sense of reality as being complex, many-layered, diverse and dynamic (i.e. changing). The fact that it is dynamic makes change an option (see Figure 3.1). As suggested in Figure 3.1, using the concept of Bhaskar's three domains to arrive at a composite picture of the "reality" of literacy acquisition offers the

possibility of identifying the causes of/leading to the current situation (i.e. the state of literacy teaching and learning).

In addressing social problems such as literacy acquisition, sometimes certain assumptions are made, which means that the social factors impacting on interactions in the classroom may not be apparent at the surface level to the teacher, or even (initially) to the researcher. It is the contention of this research that, to understand how literacy acquisition works in South Africa, it would help to identify the social mechanisms, including social structures and systems (see Figure 3.1), which might impact on literacy acquisition in the classroom.

In a multicultural country like South Africa, with recent power changes and little social cohesion, there is a tendency to target symptoms rather than causes, and to introduce piecemeal ad hoc solutions, with the underlying motives often being political correctness or political manipulation. Also in South Africa there are sensitivities, as well as stereotyping, about cultural characteristics. To understand the state of literacy acquisition in this context, and to suggest effective strategies/solutions which will transform literacy acquisition and pedagogical practice, the probable causes of this state of affairs need to be identified, that is the key mechanisms and causal factors impacting on literacy acquisition and development. It is thought that the identification of these key mechanisms and causal factors will facilitate the forming of strategies to deal with both attitudinal and situational factors (i.e. the levels dealing with “experiences” and “events” in Bhaskar’s Table 3.1)

Figure 3.2 is an attempt to show the complex backdrop of social systems, social structures and specific interventions by various agencies against which literacy acquisition takes place, and to some extent pre-empt the findings of this study. It reveals social systems, structures and specific interventions as factors which impact on literacy acquisition and development at the school level. All of these factors constitute mechanisms in one sense or another, and as such contribute to both social reproduction and transformation (Judd, 2003). As mentioned above, mechanisms are the tendencies of objects to behave in a certain way. However, mechanisms are not just actions carried out by natural or human

agency; social systems and structures have the force of mechanisms, as the network of rules and conditions governing systems and structures impel various actions and/or bring about certain states, i.e. they have “emergent properties” (Fleetwood, 2005).

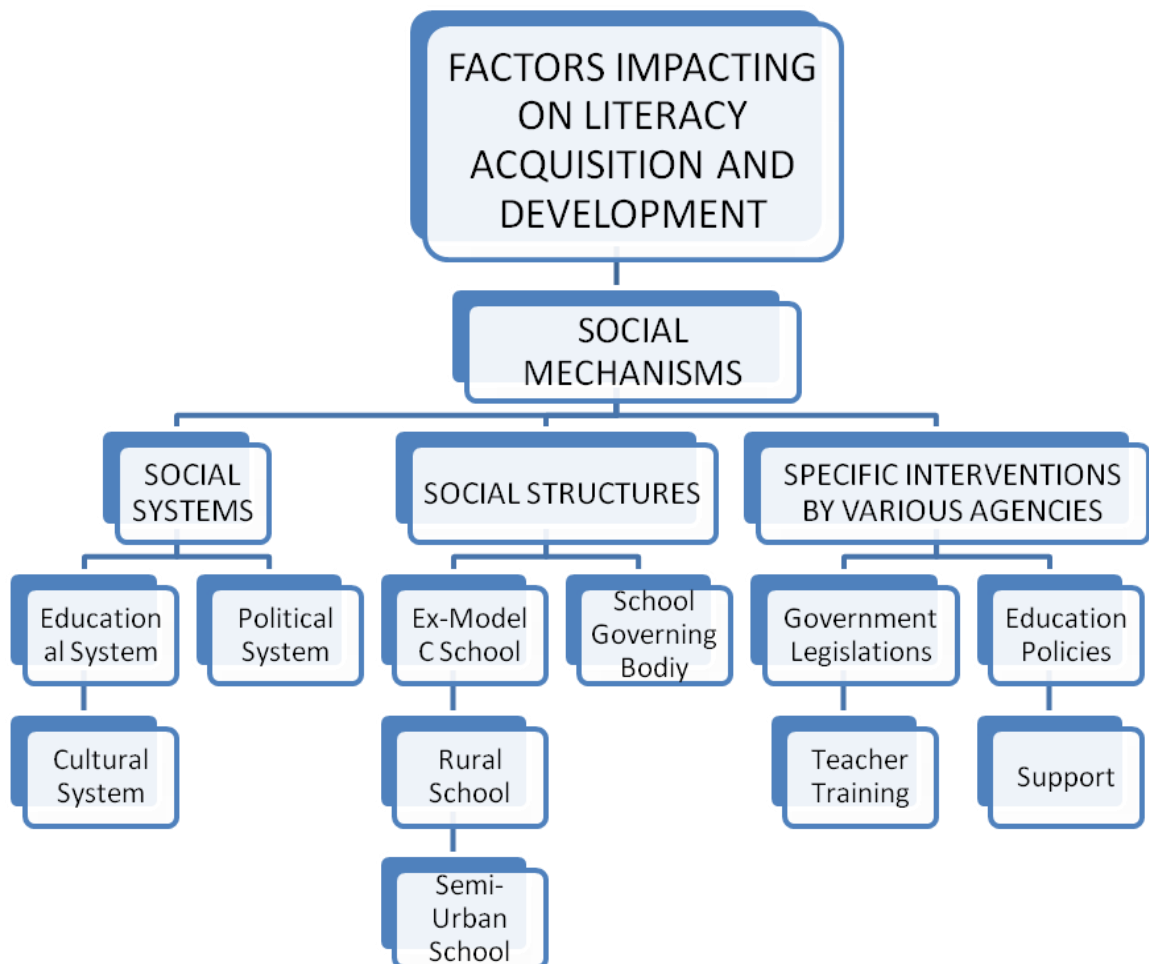


Figure 3.2 Factors impacting on literacy acquisition and development

As will be discussed further below, social systems, social structures and specific interventions (e.g. the introduction of OBE) are therefore key mechanisms bringing about social change, and not just maintaining the status quo. The humans caught up in these activities may not have explicit knowledge of the social functions performed, but intentionality is present: “institutions/institutional

structures require collective intentionality 1) to come into being, 2) to continue, and 3) to work as they do. Without collective intentions holding them up, governments, property and even corporations disappear (Hord, 2010).

3.3.1 Definition of social mechanisms

Mechanisms refer to a complex layering of natural and social forces which are not necessarily subject to human control, and which shape events. Figure 3.2 lists social mechanisms under social systems, social structures and specific interventions by various agencies, as these mechanisms are vehicles through which literacy acquisition are experienced both by teacher and learners in the classroom. Hence these mechanisms (i.e. emergent properties) are relevant in this study since they may impact positively or negatively on the process of literacy acquisition. The term “social mechanism” is used with a very wide application in social science literature generally (Mahoney, 2003, pp.14-15) uses twenty-seven definitions. Moren and Blom, in applying a critical realist approach to social work, show that generative mechanisms in social work operate as forces (i.e. reasons and motives) which – primarily activated by social workers’ and clients’ united efforts – generate client effects. Generative mechanisms are real, but seldom directly observable (Moren & Blom, 2003). But rationale and motives have true force, so does human agency itself, and the literacy patterns underpinning the learning of teachers and learners social behaviour also represent a type of social mechanism (Blunt Bugental, 2000). Mechanisms are not just social processes, however, but obey a definite form (Danermark, 2001; Franck, 2002). Franck makes it easier to specify what actually represents a mechanism by separating its formal characteristics from its practical operation, while at the same time showing the systemic relations which govern, and thus makes sense of the operation of the mechanism:

How can we recognize a mechanism in a sequence of events? I will propose one answer to these questions: the form of a mechanism, which give it a certain unity, is the combination of functions which govern its operation in general, or in other words its functional architecture (Franck, 2002, p.88).

3.3.2 Definition of social systems

Figure 3.2 lists social systems as educational, cultural and political since these have a major impact in the teaching and learning process of literacy acquisition and development as classroom level. The social system is the parent system of various systems that are embedded in it. For this study the relevance of these three systems is based on social stratification which shows that society is guided by the underlying structures in the social system. These systems are generated by human activities (i.e. of teachers and learners); so literacy acquisition and development is continuously changing due to the dynamic nature of the teachers' and learners' actions. As such, there is a mutually influential relationship in the classroom between the teachers and the learners that shape literacy development, which in turn affects the educational system, gradually bringing about changes in the cultural and political systems. Critical realism requires a deep understanding of any social situation, going beyond the observable and investigating the mechanisms behind the events (Figure 3.3). The value of critical realism lies primarily in its distinctions between the transitive and intransitive realism, "closed" and "open" system and is part of its descriptions of social relations. Its notion of emancipation, on the other hand, is of more dubious worth (Baehr, 1990). In Bhaskar's view, philosophy is not the result of pure cognitive activity; it is, like all knowledge, a social institution and relies on presuppositions about the nature of the world in which it is embedded. Philosophical dilemmas are sustained by presuppositions, whose exposure can lead to their rejection and the dissolution of the dilemmas. Such resolution is an example of what Bhaskar terms explanatory critique, which is a form of transcendental argument (Collier, 1994).

Figure 3.3 illustrates the central focus of critical realism, that is that social reality should be understood as an open stratified system of objects with causal factors/powers (Morton, 2006). These strata are the three domains of real, actual and empirical (see Table 3.1). Differentiation occurs in the existence of open as well as closed systems. Differentiation implies that laws and actions do not have uniform effects, hence the origin of the term. The distinction between mechanisms and the events they generate (or can generate) is necessary to account for why the world is differentiated. Differentiation is associated with a

horizontal analogy which Bhaskar uses throughout his work, specifically in regard to the causal efficacy of generative mechanisms in open and closed systems. Such causal efficacy is termed “transfactual”.

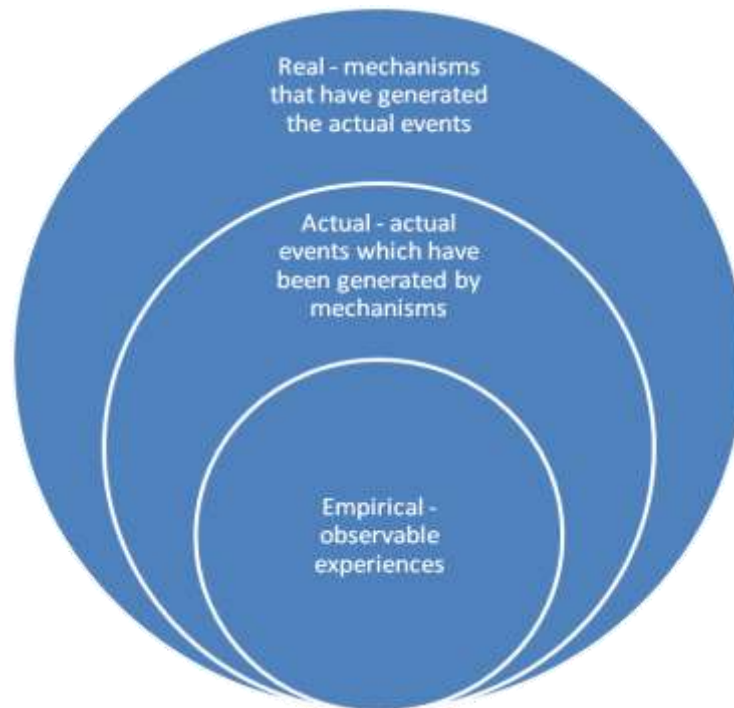


Figure 3.3 Reality as a stratified system of objects with causal factors/powers (from Mingers & Willcocks, 2004, p.189)

In this study, ontology is addressed through questions of being i.e. the properties that the teachers’ world possesses, and epistemology is addressed through questions of knowledge, that is how these properties make them possible objects of knowledge for us. The experiences of both teachers and learners are ontological phenomena. Teachers’ knowledge is referred to as the epistemological aspect of this research. The three levels of stratification of the teacher worlds are summarised. Their experiences exist when they are undergoing them in the real world. The educational context (primary schools) is in this real world of events and mechanisms. A teacher’s personal knowledge, which is tacit knowing-in-action, emerges from the experiences or from pedagogical practices. These experiences are captured in a realistic setting

and described in an interpretive way. Social events provide a terrain where teachers obtain their experiences, but activities are actual and deeper than experiences, and not all the events can be perceived by teachers and learners. For example, teachers and learners are not able to observe all aspects of literacy acquisition and development, which is “real” in the sense of an unfolding succession of events, which are always in a state of emergence from social structures. An investigation of social activity is crucial for understanding the dynamics of social knowledge embedded in activity systems. An analysis of social activity might explain why diverse teachers and learners with dissimilar social positions, contexts and backgrounds have different personal experiences. The researcher summarises the three levels of stratification in the teachers’ world as operating in:

- Events occurring in the material world (i.e. here in an educational context at school level);
- Actual experiences of teachers when they are undergoing them in the material world;
- Teachers’ personal knowledge as emerging from their actual experiences in the material world.

The researcher interviews teachers for their personal experiences to establish their social knowledge from the activity system. The researcher gathers all the facts, knowledge and explanation to the enduring mechanisms so that a descriptive and explanatory critique for teachers’ emancipation and educational change in literacy acquisition and development can be formulated in the arena of a social political context. The stratified nature of the researcher inquiry would make each result the next matter for investigation. This is an ongoing process, in which knowledge is produced by means of knowledge which is at the less fundamental stratum (Bhaskar, 1989). Teachers’ experiences as empirically described content (i.e. personal knowledge) is part of the social activity that shapes and explains the power relations inherent in the education mechanism. The nature of the explanation is stratified, and scientific inquiry is dynamic in nature, making each result the next matter for investigation, because empirical content needs to be matched to the non-empirical part of causal claims. Bhaskar argues that science must be conceived as an ongoing process of

transformation, continually or essentially in motion, in an attempt to capture (i.e. penetrate and describe) the complex and stratified nature of the world. It must be stressed that critical realism, unlike postmodern approaches, attempts to go beyond surface events to explain social patterns and systems, and that there might be agreement on the symptoms but not the causes. As Pratt points out:

It must not be assumed that critical realists share a view of social phenomena in common with, for example, sociolinguists or social constructivists, so that, while there may be agreement on surface manifestations of a social system such as literacy, neither the ontological assumptions underpinning these views nor the premises on which conclusions are based will necessarily be the same (2007, p.35).

3.3.3 Definition of social structures

The term social structure is used in the social sciences in referring to relationships or bonds between groups of individuals (e.g. societies). Generally it refers to:

- Entities or groups in definite relation to each other
- Relatively enduring patterns of behaviour and relationships within a society, or
- Social institutions and norms becoming embedded in social systems so that they shape the behaviour of people in that system (Abercrombie, Hill & Turner, 2000).

Figure 3.2 lists examples of social structures, namely, ex-model C, semi-urban and rural schools and the school governing bodies, since these are critical structures that have been investigated to gather data relating to the process of literacy acquisition. For this study the social structures are relevant since they show that society is separated into different strata or levels (i.e. social stratification). The teacher, learner, and community are both enabled and constrained by the underlying structures in the social system. Social structures influence social systems, such as the education system, cultural system and the political system. Family, religion, law, economy and class are social structures. The notion of social structure is related to a variety of central topics in social science, including the relation of structure and agency. Lopez and Scott (2000)

distinguish between institutional structure and relational structure. In the former:

...social structure is seen as comprising those cultural or normative patterns that define the expectation of agents hold about each other's behaviour and that organize their enduring relations with each other (Lopez & Scott, 2000, p.3) .

Whereas in the latter:

... social structure is seen as comprising the relationships themselves, understood as patterns of causal interconnection and interdependence among agents and their action, as well as the positions that they occupy (Lopez & Scott, 2000, p.3).

Critical realism suggests that:

- Structure necessarily pre-dates the action(s) leading to its reproduction or transformation.
- Structural elaboration necessarily post-dates the action sequence which gave rise to it (Archer, 1995).

Generative mechanisms are the tendencies of objects to behave in a certain way, and they “combine to generate the flux of phenomena that constitute the actual states and happenings of the world” (Bhaskar, 2008, p.37). “Happenings” are events that take place irrespective of our perception or knowledge of them, yet some are experienced. Bhaskar (2008; 1979) argues, in reaction to positivist experimentation with closed systems, that reality is stratified and layered, a complex open system where objects, and indeed generative mechanisms, inter(re)act, enabling or inhibiting the outcome or event. “Events are variable, systems are open precisely because given causal powers may not be activated or may be offset by others or may act in combination in a way that they do not in other combinations or alone” are clarified (Morgan, 2004). The event is itself the result of emergent generative mechanisms within a specific context. Critical realism's transcendental argument is able to avoid the epistemic fallacy by basing knowledge on a real world which is independent of thought (yet which includes the phenomenon of thought). “This argument shows that real structures exist independently of and

are often out of phase with the actual patterns of events. Indeed it is only because of the latter that we need to perform experiments and only because of the former that we can make sense of our performance of them” (Bhaskar, 2008, p.2). This point is crucial to this study, in the sense that the ad hoc adjustments intended to “improve” education in South Africa are often based on assumptions arising from a perception of surface events with no deep analysis of the complex social causes giving rise to these events *and which might make better sense of them*.

Figure 3.2 illustrates how structure, activity and experience constitute the domains of the teachers’ and learners’ reality. These structures and mechanisms are comprised namely of government legislation, educational policies, teacher training, school governing bodies (SGBs) and events and experiences of teachers and learners, which may or may not be observed or understood (Sayer 2000). These structures range from physical to social mechanisms (e.g. teacher learner/relationships at school).

This can be related to the critical realist orientation as follows. Mechanisms generate events which may be experienced by human beings but which may not be observed or understood (Archer, Bhaskar, Collier, Lawson & Norrie, 1998; Bhaskar, 1989; Sayer, 2000). As mentioned earlier, the critical realist ontology comprises three domains, the real, the actual and the empirical. The real comprises the events, mechanisms and experiences which constitute the teacher’s and learner’s world. Mechanisms, including social structures, may not be directly observed or understood (Bhaskar, 1979; Danermark, 2001; Ekstrom, 1992; Sayer, 2000). The domain of real is accessible to teachers and learners them only as events experienced (domain of actual), and become part of personal knowledge content (domain of empirical). According to the critical realist description of reality, there are many aspects of literacy acquisition and development which may not be experienced by participants, including the causes which bring about the current problematic state of affairs. It is hoped that using a critical realist perspective will empower teacher and learners by revealing and exposing the factors influencing literacy acquisition and

development, namely, any underlying structures and mechanisms which might acts as barriers to the process of acquiring literacy at primary school level.

The critical realist argues that society is not analogous to the individuals who constitute it, as its structures, institutions and conventions necessarily precede all individuals. Rather, society is an expression of the sum of the relations between individuals and groups. However, neither does society dictate or determine the actions of individuals: there is, instead, a relationship between the two where social structures emerge over and through time, and influence or “condition (not determine) social interactions” (Mutch, 2005, p.783). Social structure and human agency, according to Bhaskar’s transformation model of social action are continually reproduced by the human agency i.e. the duality of structure that works (generically conceived), that is (normally conscious) production, and (normally unconscious) reproduction of the conditions of production, this is the duality of praxis (Bhaskar, 1989, p.92).

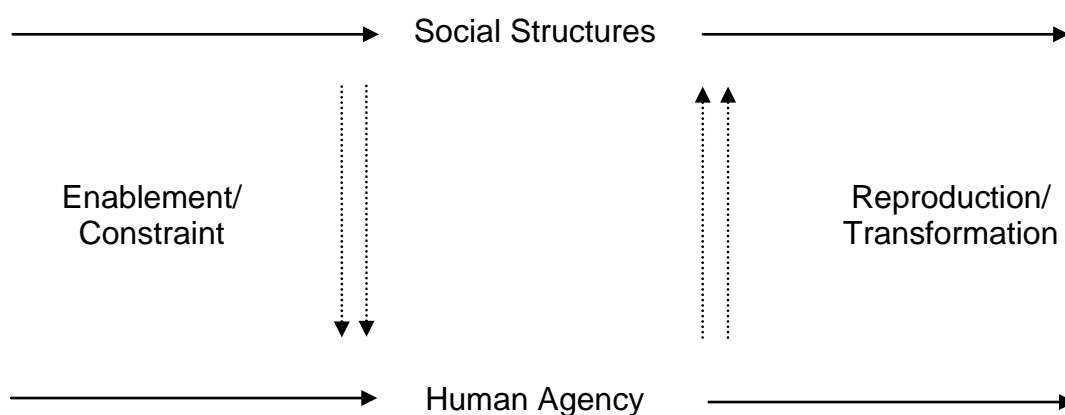


Figure 3.4 Bhaskar’s transformational model of social activity (Bhaskar, 1994, p.92, in Judd, 2003, p.49)

The social ontology of realism is based on notions of pre-existence, autonomy that is relative, influence that is causal and emergent properties and powers that serve as important counter-weight to both postmodernism and post-structuralism. It also enables us to analyze critically the social processes by which structure and agency shape and reshape one another over time as

illustrated in Figure 3.4. Figure 3.4 suggests that the critical realist account of social reality makes that claim that society must be understood as made up by intentional actors (teacher and learners) as well as social structures with emergent powers which enable and facilitate, also restrict and direct, individual action as in the case of literacy acquisition and development. Social structures are conceived as pre-existing individual actions, and are thus irreducible to them. However, by working within social structures in planning and performing individual action, the agents contribute to reproducing and transforming these structures. The account offered then, represents an elaboration of the agency-structure problem in which the links between action and structure are carefully argued. Archer's argument is to insist that the world has a regulatory effect upon us and our understanding of it, and vice versa: "These effects are independent of our full discursive penetration, just as gravity influenced us, and the projects we could entertain, long before we conceptualised it" (Archer, 2002, p12).

Teachers' and learners' realities are partly formed by social structures and institutions; "structure, it is argued, necessarily predates agency, and elaborations of structure necessarily post-date these actions" (McAnulla, 1998, p.7). In this model, "society must be regarded as an ensemble of structures, practices and conventions which learners and teachers reproduce or transform, but which would not exist unless they did so" (Bhaskar, 1979, p.45). However, teachers and learners also have the capacity to transform or modify those social structures and institutions.

Critical realism offers an appropriate perspective from which to view the complex processes involved in acquiring literacy and development. As it is the process of production which critical realists have represented as being crucial in transforming social structures, the focus of this study is literacy acquisition and development. In developing and acquiring language at primary school both teachers and learners are aware of their social issues which permeate their instances of production, and to empower them by showing them which social issues (i.e. socio-cultural) are negotiable and which are less amenable to change (i.e. systemic), it is necessary to see how they act in acquiring and

developing literacy and to reflect on the larger social forces with which they are involved. When teachers engage in literate practices they both reproduce and transform the social phenomenon of literacy itself (social structures are activity-dependent). Social structures by their very definition do not admit of ad hoc or random functioning, or there would be no social constraints on human action, nor would self-actualisation through human agency be possible, as we would have no concept of the social genres available, or knowledge how to engage in them. This means that there are generalities which exist over and above local social conditions or mores, for example, the existence of social genres or forms: precisely what shape these forms take in specific instances is the work of the social anthropologist or ethnologist. There are systemic relations in both the structure and acquisition and development of literacy, illustrated by various grammars and schematics (Chomsky, 1965; Halliday, 1985).

The findings about literacy practices were further described in terms of a Bernsteinian model of pedagogic practice, conceptualised pedagogic practice as containing the “what” and the “how” of the teaching/learning process, relayed through the pedagogic discourse (Bernstein, 1990, 1996, 2000). In this study, understandings from the interviews at classroom level form the pedagogic discourses of the various teachers. The pedagogic discourse is essentially a re-contextualised discourse. Bernstein (1990, 1996, 2000) states that although one text, it contains an instructional discourse (the knowledge, skills and competencies to be learned) embedded in a regulative discourse (the rules of social order in the classroom). That is, the expectations about behaviour and the social relations among learners and between learners and teachers (the regulative discourse) influence the knowledge, skills and competencies co-constructed in the lessons (the instructional discourse). Accordingly, the descriptions of the interviews fit into Bernstein’s model of pedagogic practice. The model provides a means of systematically analysing the constitution of the literacy knowledge, literacy practices and cultural difference across literacy acquisition and development at school level.

Bhaskar believes that the conceptual categories that we use to identify and understand social events are not exogenously determined; rather these

categories are socially and historically determined. Thus Bhaskar addresses a deeper issue using a transcendental realist approach by investigating the preconditions of the possibility of social activity. Then Bhaskar continues his analytical analogy between the study of nature and society by asking, "What are the preconditions of the possibility of experiments?" Here, Bhaskar makes a sharp ontological distinction between "patterns of events" and "causal laws." He explains that the patterns [scientists] produce thoroughly in the laboratory is that it enables them to identify the mode of operation of natural structures, mechanisms or processes which they do not produce. A real distinction between the objects of experimental investigation, such as causal laws, and patterns of events, is thus a condition of the intelligibility of experimental activity (Bhaskar, 1989).

3.4 Critical realism and social structures

This section will look at social structures in critical realism. The aim of realist research is to develop a better understanding of these enduring structures and mechanisms. Ontological factors, therefore, must be the primary factor in defining research approaches; this requirement necessarily forcing a strong philosophical commitment. For the realist, academic politics and traditional researcher skills and background should not define research approaches; the nature of what is to be investigated is the primary concern. Moreover, the role of language in regulating social behaviour tends to be over-emphasised. Sayer states: "not all social behaviour is acquired and mediated linguistically, even in the form of talk internalized in our heads" (Sayer, 2000, p.15), and Bhaskar points out that "even our interactions with each other have many dimensions which are non-linguistic" (Norrie, 1998, p.8). Human communication clearly does contribute to social structures, but, as Fleetwood points out, it is an "exaggeration" to claim that it creates them (2005, p.206). According to van Bouwel (2005, p.32):

The Critical Realist perspective was born out of a vigorous critique on the positivist conception of science. It pleads for the reorientation of social science, unveiling the epistemic fallacy committed by positivists. This is the fallacy that transposes what is an ontological matter into an epistemological matter; a failure to adequately sustain the distinction between ontology and epistemology, resulting in the relative neglect of

ontology. The positivist social scientist analyses statements about being solely in terms of statements about knowledge, and thus reduce ontology to epistemology. Therefore, as a reaction to this neglect, it is 'opportune to develop a perspective on the way that social reality is' (Lawson 1997, 154).

Central in the focus on social ontology, then, is the transcendental argument for social structures, elaborated by Bhaskar. He derives an account of metaphysics of science by enquiring what the world must be like before it is investigated by science, and for scientific activities to be possible. Bhaskar's transcendental realism defends the existence of social structures and society as follows:

For all activity presupposes the prior existence of social forms. Thus consider saying, making and doing as characteristics modalities of human agency. People cannot communicate except by utilizing existing media, produce except by applying themselves to materials which are already formed, or act save in some other context. Speech requires language; making materials; actions conditions; agency resources; activity rules. Even spontaneity has as its necessary condition the pre-existence of a social form with (or by means of) which the spontaneous act is performed. Thus if [as previously argued] the social cannot be reduced to (and is not the product of) the individual, it is equally clear that society is a necessary condition for any intentional human act at all (Bhaskar, 1979, p.34).

This argument is used to establish that "the social cannot be reduced to (and is not the product of) the individual, it is equally clear that society is a necessary condition for any intentional human act at all" (Bhaskar, 1979, p.34). Bhaskar had formulated an argument about underlying mechanisms and structures in the natural sciences as well. This argument could, however, not be directly transferred from natural sciences (in which scientists are able to acquire knowledge of underlying mechanisms at work via experimentation) to the social realm; some substantial modifications were necessary, as experimentation in social sciences is rare. So the case for the existence of structures in the social realm provided by the transcendental argument for social structure is not analogous to the argument from experiments in the natural sciences.

It is important at this point to define reality in the critical realist paradigm. Reality exists independently of us and of our knowledge and/or perception of it. Failure

to distinguish between reality and our conception of it is referred to as the epistemic fallacy. In critical realism, reality consists of three different layers: empirical (observable by human beings), actual (existing in time and space), and real (transfactual and more enduring than our perception of it). The latter contains structures that have powers and liabilities from which observable events emerge. Thus social phenomena emerge from the deep underlying real structures, become actual, and then empirical. Whereas our understanding of these social phenomena goes exactly in the opposite direction (from empirical to actual and then to real), which makes understanding them a very difficult task. Bhaskar distinguished the transitive or epistemological dimension of reality from its intransitive dimension. The transitive dimension is essentially our perception of reality, whereas the intransitive dimension is the actual underlying structure of reality. It is important to point out that Bhaskar is mainly concerned with ontology.

3.5 Implications of Bhaskar's ontology for research

Critical realism depicts reality as complex, many-layered, diverse and dynamic. The work started by Bhaskar in the 1970s is now gaining momentum as one of the major strands of a social scientific method, competing with positivist empiricism and post-structuralism. In the philosophy of awareness, Bhaskar's critical realism holds that some of our sense-data, for example primary qualities, accurately characterise nonessential events, properties and objects, while some of our other sense-data include secondary qualities and perceptual illusions. Critical realism is based on the existence of an objectively knowable, mind-independent reality. According to Locke some sense-data such as secondary qualities do not represent anything in the external world, even if they are caused by external qualities (Locke, 1690). The concepts "intransitive" and "transitive" forms of knowledge are used to accentuate the distinction between ontology and epistemology respectively (Baker, 1991). While our knowledge is "real", it is transient and occupies a different dimension (and domain) of reality from enduring intransient objects of knowledge. Objects in reality may occupy the transient or intransient dimension. In theorising, social scientists are participating in the discourse of their field which attempts to explain a pre-

existing reality. Past theories constitute an object of knowledge as much as the item in itself.

These two aspects of the philosophy of science justify our talking of two dimensions and two kinds of “object” of knowledge: a transitive dimension, in which the object is the material cause or antecedently established knowledge which is used to generate the new knowledge; and an intransitive dimension, in which the object is the real structure or mechanism that exists and acts quite independently of men and the conditions which allow men to access it (Bhaskar, 2008, p.6).

According to Dobson and Love (2004), Bhaskar would argue that the methods of the sciences can be applied to social science research, but in different ways. This is because he views science as a process of developing awareness rather than the formulation of fixed scientific “laws”. Social science research, then, involves the “steady unearthing of the increasingly deeper structures and mechanisms which make up the objects under study” (Dobson & Love, 2004, p.96).

In critical realist research, structures and mechanisms are the explanatory source of the interaction which may generate various behaviours. There is interplay between humans and the structures within which they live their lives. Teachers are positioned by structures, but at the same time, constitute them through their participation in activities relevant to those structures. Hence human interactions can change, replicate or constitute the social structure. This study is carried out within the critical realist orientation as it is considered to have the potential for transforming educational structures by offering insights into the underlying causes of what is perceived as a literacy crisis.

3.6 Empowerment by means of critical realism

It must be emphasised that critical realism is not emancipatory *per se*. However, because social structures and systems can frustrate individual efforts for change, an understanding of the complex factors involved potentially empowers participants by making the available choices clearer. This facilitates strategising and lobbying. The key aspect of critical realism is the endeavour to empower teachers by revealing and then exposing the power of the unobserved

underlying structures and mechanisms, which may be acting as a barrier in the process of literacy acquisition and development (Livock, 2008). The transitive/intransitive divide from within an interpretivist perspective Trauth (2001) discusses the important factors in selecting research approaches considers the important factors that affect researcher's decisions regarding the research approach to adopt. She argues that the following factors are important in the decision to use qualitative approaches and in the actual choice of qualitative methods:

- The research problem
- The researcher's theoretical lens
- The degree of uncertainty surrounding the phenomena
- The researcher's skills
- Academic politics

It is useful to present a critical realist perspective as based on her argument. She suggests that the most important factor may well be the research problem because it sheds light on this study: "what one wants to learn suggests how one should go about it" (Trauth, 2001, p.4).

Hence, the selection of an interpretative approach as the most appropriate means of examining literacy acquisition. The researcher's theoretical lens is also suggested as playing an important role in the choice of methods because the underlying belief system of the researcher largely defines the choice of method. In fact, in many cases, she suggests that the choice of lens is often driven by a desire to avoid the shortcomings of positivism. Another important factor in the decision to adopt qualitative approaches may be the high levels of uncertainty in the problem situation, which could lead to difficulties in positivistic measurement. Researchers' skills can also define what methods are to be used, as can academic politics. For the critical realist, most of the factors suggested by Trauth can be seen to be primarily concerned with the transitive epistemological aspects of the research process rather than the intransitive ontological aspects, as in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2 Epistemological and ontological concerns

Primarily epistemological concerns	Primarily ontological concerns
The researcher's theoretical lens	The research problem i.e. current state of literacy crises
The researcher's skills	The degree of uncertainty surrounding the phenomena
Academic politics	

The interpretivist does not make this distinction, as Mutch suggests:

Interpretivism asserts that reality, as well as our knowledge thereof, are social products and hence incapable of being understood independent of the social actors (including the researchers) that construct and make sense of that reality (Mutch, 2005, p.13).

Critical realism recognises that a real world exists outside of the subjective experiences of an individual researcher, and social phenomena are conceived as “the product of a plurality of (social) structures” (Bhaskar, 1989, p.3). These social structures are not readily apparent but may be after systematic detailed analysis of the data as Bhaskar supplies further details on social structures.

All social structures – for instance the economy, the state, and the family, language-dependent upon or presuppose social relations – which may include the social relations between capital and labour, ministers and civil servants, parents and children. The relations into which people enter pre-exist the individuals who enter them, and whose activity reproduces or transforms them, so they themselves are structures. And it is to these structures of social relations that realism directs our attention – both as the explanatory key to understanding social events and trends and as the focus of social activity aimed at the self-emancipation of the exploited and oppressed (Bhaskar, 1989, p.4).

Thus critical realism focuses on human relations as structures that constitute but do not determine the nature of the social activity. Furthermore, according to critical realism, these structures shape the nature of the interaction that are not immediately apparent from the interaction. In addition, the semi-structured nature of the interviews for this research meant that there was an implicit expectation that teachers did account for their answers and that the researcher queried those accounts further. Such foundational expectations about literacy acquisition and development form the intransitive knowledge and shape literacy that is apparent in the interviews and classrooms. Bhaskar considered

“reasons and accounts” as “real ontological entities” because “the mechanisms ... that produce beliefs ... and actions, are produced, exists and evolve in that social world” (Corson, 1991, p.10). According to critical realism, the social structures or mechanisms that compose literacy acquisition may be seen as reading and talking interactions, termed as “intransitive”, because it can be seen that stable patterns of talking or acquiring and usually represent cultural norms (Baker, 1991). For Bhaskar mechanisms generate events that may be experienced by human beings. In this study, these mechanisms could include elements such as government policies, school governing bodies, and teacher training and support (or lack of it). Structures and mechanisms range from physical ones to social mechanisms such as the teacher and learner relationships in the classroom.

Structures in critical realism are the explanatory source of the interaction which generate various behaviours (Crothers, 1998; Frazer, 1995; Joseph, 1998). According to critical realism, there is interplay between humans and the structures within which they live their lives (Crothers, 1998). People are positioned by the structures, but at the same time, constitute them through their participation in activities relevant to those structures (Joseph, 1998). Hence human interactions can change, replicate or constitute the social structures (see Figure 3.4 above).

3.7 Stratification

Stratification is associated with a vertical analogy which Bhaskar deploys throughout his works and is related to causal structure. More generally, stratification refers to the simultaneous causal efficacy of different emergent levels. Ontological stratification is the layering of ontology into the levels of the real, the actual, and the empirical; it is an indispensable to critical realism and is a significant contribution to philosophy. Stratification applies in the transitive domain of knowledge as well as the intransitive domain, such as a piece of knowledge as opposed to the cognitive structures which generate knowledge by transforming anterior knowledge (Shipway, 2002). Bhaskar’s argument, derived from the stratification observable in nature, is based on his “depth realism” that

is established in the three domains (see Table 3.1). He believes that the depth is not just epistemological but also ontological because there is a real ordering of the strata, not just difference in the case of access to knowledge about them (Archer, Bhaskar, Collier, Lawson & Norrie, 1998). At the level of the real, mechanisms exist which generate phenomena (i.e. events) which may be experienced at the level of the actual, but may not be observed fully, which leads to impartial personal knowledge (i.e. of events and mechanisms) at the level of the empirical. Stratification for the researcher is both ontological (concerning questions of being) and epistemological (concerning questions of knowledge). The stratification of literacy acquisition and development is shown in Table 3.3.

Table 3.3 Stratification in literacy acquisition and development

Domain (ontological level)	Literacy acquisition and development
real	The events which comprise literacy acquisition and development, and the social mechanisms which drive these events.
actual	Teachers' and learners' experience of literacy acquisition and development.
empirical	Teachers' and learners' personal knowledge of literacy acquisition and development.

- (*Domain of real*) Social events provide a terrain where teachers and learners obtain their experiences, but activities are actual and deeper than experiences. Events are emergent from the social mechanisms which drive these events. Literacy acquisition and development are not only governed but also generated by underlying mechanisms.
- (*Domain of actual*) Teachers' and learners' experiences exist when the person is undergoing them in the material world. This material world is the primary educational context.
- (*Domain of empirical*) Teachers' and learners' personal knowledge is described as tacit, knowing-in-action, or practical intuition, emerges from the empirical world or from their pedagogical practices (classroom or site).

Teachers and learners experiences are captured in a realistic way, and thereafter described in an interpretive way (Crothers,1998, slightly adapted).

3.8 Conclusion

Critical realism is a life philosophy, and not an orientation which can be taken up and set aside as needed depending on the subject and purpose of research, as the researcher has already emphasised. The researcher's reason for consciously adopting this orientation and studying some of the philosophical issues underpinning it as represented in Bhaskar's works was that it was congruent with her personal life philosophy at the time of focusing on this particular research study. It is the contention of this research that, to understand how literacy acquisition works in South Africa, it would help to identify the social mechanisms, including social structures and systems (see Figure 3.1) which might impact on literacy acquisition in the classroom. In a multicultural country such as South Africa, with recent power changes and little social cohesion, there is a tendency to target symptoms rather than causes, and to introduce piecemeal ad hoc solutions, with the underlying motives often being political correctness or political manipulation. This research seeks to explain the state of literacy acquisition and development by investigating how educational and other structures impact on actual classroom practice. The next chapter discusses the research methodology.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

“As a methodology, critical realism is qualitative, interpretive, critical and real”
(Livock, 2008, p11).

4.1 Introduction

As mentioned earlier (Chapter Three), the complex layering of Bhaskar’s ontology provides the philosophical and methodological justification for this study in showing how literacy acquisition and development is a social process involving the complex layers of causality. Critical realism has a realist ontology but a constructivist epistemology, it is important for any research that its process and findings are credible (Maxwell, 1992), one of the strategies to test that is triangulation (Henning, Van Rensburg & Smit, 2004). Credibility establishes the researcher spending time in an interview situation to build participants’ confidence and become accustomed to telling the researcher their experiences. In order to enhance the credibility of this study, documentations were analysed, such as learning programmes, timetables and the school literacy policy. The purpose of this chapter is to describe and discuss the overall research design of this project. It also highlights the appropriateness of the survey methodology and semi-structured interviews for the purposes of data collection. The researcher begins by showing how the research questions shape the methodology chosen. Then explanation is given about the data generation procedure, description of participants and analysis method, an account of how ethical considerations were dealt with and ends with a discussion on literacy and social constructivism.

4.2 Research design and methodology

The research methodology chosen was designed to provide answers to the research questions. It must be emphasised that the research design and methodology are predicated on the existence of social mechanisms, for example social systems, social structures, and specific interventions (i.e. by

various agents) which might impact on literacy acquisition and development at school level. The identification of possible factors in advance of data collection and analysis is consistent with critical realist research practice in constituting a kind of proto-theory to be tested out and refined in the data analysis (see Bhaskar 1978, p164-167, 1979, p61-63). It must be remembered that critical realism uses the concept of transcendental argument (Collier, 1994), in other words, making an intuitive projection or "transcendental leap" which pre-empts the findings. Critical realists do not believe that this necessarily compromises the findings. Pratt identifies the tendency to label proto-theories as suspect as the "theory-determinant fallacy" (Pratt, 2007, p36-37), based on Sayer's argument that "observation which is theory-laden" is not necessarily "theory-determined" (1992, p73).

Figure 4.1 shows the tentative framework of focus for the case studies (as listed below), but was not intended to exclude any other significant factors which might later be uncovered. It contains factors which the researcher was aware were problematic, in her position as Senior Trainer at Ikhwezi In-service Training Institute. The ways in which these (and other possible) factors might combine was not known, however, nor the underlying systems and structures which might have caused them. As shown in Figure 4.1, the following causal factors were identified in advance as being associated with key areas in literacy acquisition. The scope and impact, as well as the specific ways in which they impacted individually or in combination, was to be established by means of the case studies:

Possible causal factor 1: The implementation of the Language in Education Policy (LiEP) (1997) in practice, with three causal sub-factors possibly impacting on literacy acquisition, namely:

- understanding the concept of literacy,
- the School Language Policy and
- the implementation of the Language in Education Policy (LiEP)

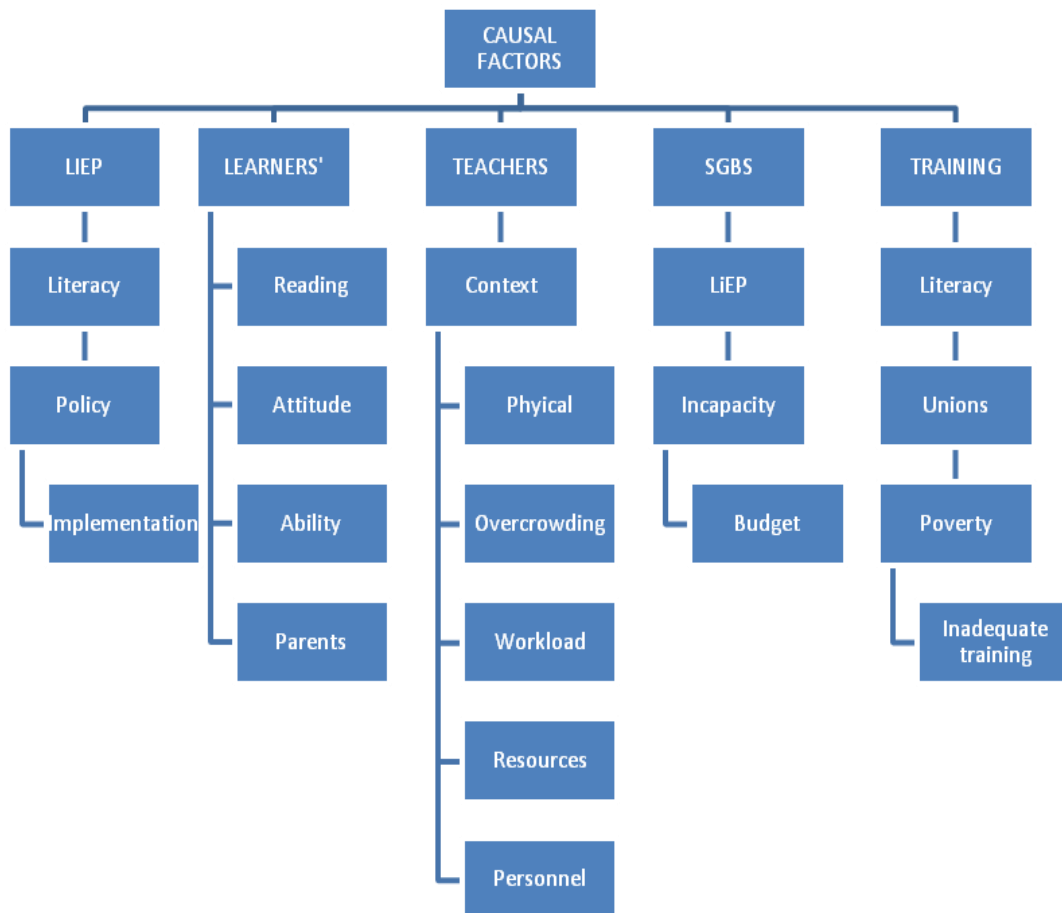


Figure 4.1 Framework of possible causal factors impacting on literacy acquisition

Possible causal factor 2: Performance of learners in the classroom, with four causal sub-factors possibly impacting on performance, namely:

- reading,
- attitude
- ability of learners
- parents and mother tongue education

Possible causal factor 3: Performance of teachers in the classroom, which is subsumed by seven causal sub-factors possibly impacting on performance, namely:

- local social context
- physical challenge

- workload
- overcrowding
- literacy
- resources
- personnel

Possible causal factor 4: The role of the School Governing Body (SGB), involving three related causal sub-factors, namely:

- promoting LiEP
- incapacity
- budgeting

Possible causal factor 5: Teacher training and support, where four causal sub-factors emerge, namely:

- teachers' personal literacy
- teacher unions
- poverty and AIDS/HIV
- inadequate training.

The results of the investigation exploring these possible causal factors are dealt with in Chapter Five. The methodology used will be discussed below.

An exploratory, descriptive research design, implementing both quantitative and qualitative research methods, was selected to explore the causal factors at a deeper level. The researcher used an in-depth case study method, which is the essence of interpretive research (Locke, Spirduso & Silverman, 2000; Radnor, 2002). As a methodology, critical realism is qualitative, interpretive, critical and real (Livock, 2008). It is argued that case studies can be classified as either describing or explaining a particular research phenomenon as such, researchers first must finalise which approach they are going to adopt. The concept explanation suggests a realist approach and description suggests an interpretative approach (Dobson, 2001). A research design may be called “a

pattern” (Gough, 2001, p.4) or “plan” (McMillan & Schumacher, 1993, p.31), for example, a case study design.

Case study methodology is an “in-depth investigation to portray the complex pattern of what is being studied in sufficient depth and detail so that one who has not experienced it can understand it (Kvale, 1996, p.56). In discussing this case study design, the researcher describes the procedures that was followed while conducting the empirical component of this study (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000). A case study investigates a real situation and enables the researcher to understand that situation clearly (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000, p.159). This implies that case studies are able to portray, analyse, and interpret unique situations that cannot be reduced to numbers. For example the role of the teachers and learners in literacy acquisition and development at primary level and in specific contexts can be described better by words than in numbers. A case study is an intensive study of a specific individual or a specific context. The case study’s commitment is to “come to grips” with the social world (De Vos *et al.*, 2002). This project focuses on coming to grips with the specific participants (teacher and learners) of the Intermediate Phase within the specific social context of literacy acquisition at school level. The strength of the case study method is its ability to examine, in-depth, a “case” within its “real-life” context.

In case studies the researcher gains access to the “real life” context of the school, its participants and its environment (Yin, 2005, p.364) . Furthermore, a case study provides “a unique example of real people in real situations, which enables readers to have a clear understanding of ideas” (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007, p.254). Case studies reveal contexts which are dynamic because of the unfolding social interactions as is expected in the case of the teachers and learners at school level. Cohen *et al.* (2007, p.254) state that case studies are:

- set in temporal, geographical, organisational, institutional and other contexts that enable boundaries to be drawn around the case;
- defined by the individuals and groups involved and their roles and functions.

These case studies were set in schools situated in the geographical locations of the Mariannhill, Pinetown and Ndwedwe areas. As for the case studies being defined by participants and their roles and functions, in these case studies each teacher had his/her own interpretation of his/her role in literacy acquisition and development in primary education

According to Huysamen (2001) and Best and Kahn (2003), the term case study indicates that a limited number of units of analysis such as an individual, group or institution are studied. This research is confined to three schools as the researcher felt that the data gained would be sufficient for this particular study. In each case study the researcher sought to understand the intricacies, uniqueness and idiosyncrasies of a particular case. Although the same study is conducted at three schools, each school is unique, has its own dynamics and has therefore yielded different data. According to Anderson (1993, p.163) the case-study design lacks reliability, as another researcher conducting the same study may arrive at a different conclusion. It is, therefore, necessary for more than one research instrument to be used in order to ensure validity. This study used semi-structured interviews, a survey and document analysis in order to generate data. These methods assisted in triangulating the data generated. Through triangulation the researcher identified consistencies and inconsistencies in the data provide by the teachers in the Intermediate Phase.

Triangulation is the combination of methods or techniques. The word triangulation also suggests the possibility that the view from each vantage point may be different. From one viewpoint, some items of literacy acquisition may be masked (as in survey research, when the respondent has no control over the line of questioning, just the answers.) From another viewpoint, differing views may emerge (as in structured interviewing if the researcher sticks too closely to an a priori theoretical or discursive framework). And from a third viewpoint, one might get a clear view of the first two viewpoints and of the measuring instruments at those viewpoints. Triangulation may enable better measurement, but it will also reveal differences of interpretation and meaning. However, thematic analysis (as was done in this study) can be used to re-assess the meanings of questionnaires and the theoretical frameworks or social practices

that lie behind them. Triangulation may mean that one uses quantitative and qualitative data; or quantitative data and documentary analysis (Huysamen, 2001); or econometrics and life histories; or comparative analysis of country data along with case studies of industries. Triangulation involves a complex research design, usually with stages of research which may re-iterate (Danermark, 2001).

This research methodology of this project was well-matched to the research questions probing literacy acquisition and development. The emphasis on case study design was on providing answers to the questions posed in this study, as it allowed the researcher to study one case and generate data about that case via the interview technique and interpret and analyse the data as it was generated. The case studies covered the knowledge and experiences of teachers of the Intermediate Phase as to how they set up the general parameters of their roles in the teaching and learning process of literacy acquisition and development.

4.3 Interpretive approach

An interpretive approach was used in this research as it enabled the researcher to investigate what the Intermediate Phase teacher's role were and how they functioned at school level. Different experiences of teachers led to different personal interpretations of what was happening around them in school. In an interpretive approach the researcher is a vital instrument because the researcher is fully involved as an instrument of data generation. The "I was there" element in the portrayal of the picture of the phenomenon being studied is part of the design. On this issue Marshall states:

Her presence in the lives of the participants invited to be part of the study is fundamental to the paradigm. Whether that presence is sustained ... or whether brief but personal, as in-depth interviews studies, the researcher enters into the lives of the participants (Marshall & Rossman, 1989, p.59).

The researcher was using this approach because it enabled her to make sense of the complexities of literacy acquisition and development from the point of view of those who live it and in relation to how the researcher interprets and

make sense of it. Therefore, the compositional structure of the design separates facts from values, and the inherent subjectivity in this research in relation to people and the social world (Lynch, 2004). Relationships are more complex and fluid, with directions of influence shifting rather than fixed whereby, large quantities of qualitative data are generated to acquire an in-depth understanding of how meaning is created at school level (Lynch, 2004). However, the participants are not the interpreters because the researcher generates data, that is, the researchers interpret and make meaning of the participants' perspectives and experiences as they live it. This is spoken of as an abiding concern for the real life world, for the emic point of view that is the world of lived reality and situation specific meanings (Creswell, 2003; Kerlinger, 1992; Pillay, 2005). The goal of this research was to develop an understanding by constructing meaning of the data that has been generated within the school setting. The researcher was interested to know what teachers experienced in their school life.

The methodology of interpretivism can best be described as dialectic. Dialectic is reflective of the dialogue imagined in the subjective approach and the need to test interpretive theory against human experience. Ekstrom describes the methodology as “a science which aims at the interpretative understanding of social conduct and thus at the explanation of its causes, its course, and its effects” (Ekstrom, 1992). Through hermeneutics, the raw data consists of description. The description is made through the naturally symbolic use of literacy acquisition and development. The meaning of the language is derived in part by the society from which it arises. The Interpretive approach is tested by referring back to human practice within the society. If the interaction produces the anticipated result then the approach is corroborated and vice versa. A description of the methods used within this approach follows.

4.4 Qualitative and quantitative methods

Qualitative methods were mainly used in this study, but quantitative methods were also used, as they provided an overview of certain commonalities thought to exist between various contexts. Qualitative methods afforded the researcher

the opportunity to understand the participants, their experiences and perspectives (Huysamen, 2001; Mathers, Fox & Hunn, 2002; Rubin & Rubin, 1995), while quantitative methods can be used to complement and strengthen “rich data” by showing broad trends and tendencies (Cupchik, 2001). Insights yielded during qualitative method gives credence to the suggestive stimuli design that are presented to applicable groups, and the accompanying statistical relations help tease out the underlying processes. These statistics draw our attention to socially meaningful events and allow us to re-examine them in descriptive depth (Yeung, 1997, p.57). Together, qualitative and quantitative methods provide complementary views of the phenomena, and efforts at achieving their reconciliation can elucidate processes underlying them (Cupchik, 2001). The qualitative methods involved in-depth case-studies, which, according to Radnor (2002), are the essence of interpretive research. The intention was to come to grips with the social world in which the literacy acquisition process takes place, with particular focus on classroom practice (De Vos, Strydom, Fouche & Delport, 2002) and to refine the theory behind the practice. According to Yeung, “qualitative methods such as interactive interviews and ethnography are necessary to abstract the causal mechanisms of which quantitative/statistical methods are oblivious” (1997, p.57). Transcriptions from the semi-structured interviews were analysed according to emerging themes. Documents relating to school practice (e.g. policies, procedures and learning programmes) were also analysed for any insights they offered into the participant data.

This research employed qualitative methods in order to answer the research questions given in Chapter One. Qualitative research questions focus on the words and action of the participants that occur in a specific context and in this case the school setting constituted three specific contexts (i.e. the different primary schools). Qualitative methods afford the researcher the opportunity to understand the participants and their experiences and perspectives (Mathers, Fox & Hunn, 2002). This approach denotes the type of inquiry in which “qualities, the characteristics or the properties” (Henning, Van Rensburg & Smit, 2004, p.5) of a phenomenon are examined for the researcher’s better understanding and explanation of it. Additionally, the qualitative approach

produces a wealth of comprehensive information about a small number of cases by increasing the extent of understanding of the cases and situations studied and by reducing the generalisability often negatively associated with quantitative approaches (Patton, 2002).

The features of qualitative research are descriptions and accounts of the processes of social interaction in a natural setting such as it occurs every day in a school setting (Vulliamy & Webb, 1992). They are enriched by quantitative methods, however, particularly use of surveys in advance (as in this study) to detect trends or patterns which can be probed in more depth by means of qualitative methods. Quantitative methods can yield insights to the extent that evocative stimuli designs are presented to relevant groups, and the resulting statistical interactions help tease out the underlying processes. Statistically significant effects can draw our attention to socially meaningful events which are then re-examined in descriptive depth. This interplay between descriptive richness and experimental precision can bring accounts of social phenomena to progressively greater levels of clarity. Together, qualitative and quantitative methods provide complementary views of the phenomena, and efforts at achieving their reconciliation can elucidate processes underlying them (Cupchik, 2001).

The research design of this study was intended to give a voice to Intermediate Phase teachers to speak and to express their own reflections about their experiences, and how these impacted on the teaching and learning processes taking place in literacy acquisition and development. It did this by way of generating data from the survey, interviews and document analysis. In the next section the selection of participants and sites is explained in relation to this study.

4.5 Selection criteria for school sites and participants

Using purposeful sampling (Wilkinson & Birmingham, 2003, p.41) the researcher chose three primary schools in the Pinetown and Ndwedwe Districts of the EtheKwini Region in KwaZulu-Natal (the map is shown in Figure 1.3

above). By “purposive sampling”, the researcher means that she preferred this sampling technique over other sampling strategies such as random sampling, because she was focusing on insights gained from the Intermediate Phase teachers and, in particular, the effects (i.e. on literacy acquisition) of different school contexts (Bauer & Gaskell, 2000). The logic of purposeful sampling of school sites lies in selecting information-rich cases for in depth information of the school site for this study (Yin, 2005, p.262). By “information-rich” the researcher means that the experiences and perspectives of individual schools helped the researcher to glean salient information for this project.

The researcher’s criteria for selecting these schools as units for analysis were as follows:

- An established school literacy/language committee; this is essential for this project to investigate that teacher’s relationship to literacy acquisition and development in relation to teacher training and support.
- A language-heterogeneous school learner community, comprising English speakers and isiZulu speakers, so as to establish how schools manage and cater for the different language groups. The researcher was interested in the contexts with heterogeneous language groups to see how language impacts on literacy acquisition and development in these schools.
- Location in different social contexts, which means that the schools had to be in different settings; this criterion was necessary because researcher wanted to elicit information to understand how the location contributed to the social context.
- Previous contact with these schools by the researcher; this prior contact was an advantage for this project because of the knowledge the researcher had of the social context.
- Geographic proximity in the Pinetown and Ndwedwe districts; this was because of the time, finances, and the logistics involved in generating and analysing information that was required to complete this study successfully. In order to keep travelling costs at a minimum, the chosen schools were within close proximity to each other.

4.5.1 Description of Contexts

The geographical area identified for this study was Mariannhill, Pinetown and Ndwedwe in the EtheKwini Region of KwaZulu-Natal. As this research aimed to target three specific contexts i.e. urban, semi-urban and rural, all participating schools had to fall within the specified geographical area.

4.5.2 Type of schools

Public primary schools from the Department of Education (DoE) were chosen for this research project. The Pinetown District school (see Table 4.1), Milo Primary was formerly a House of Delegates school (semi-urban) located in the suburb of Mariannhill. This is a predominantly Indian suburb that borders a peri-urban and rural area settled with isiZulu-speaking families, but Milo Primary enrolls learners from the Madiba Valley informal settlement. The second school, Joel Primary, was formerly an Ex Model C (urban) located in the suburb of Pinetown. This school caters for learners from exclusive wealthy families of White, Indian, Coloured and Black learners from the urban areas of Pinetown, Mariannhill, Shallcross and Marianridge. The third school, John Primary (rural) is in the suburb of Ndwedwe. In the apartheid era Joel Primary catered exclusively for White learners; the demographic profile of the enrolled learners in 2009 shows that about 90% of the learners are Black and speak isiZulu as their home language. Thus the selected schools have changed considerably since 1994, and operate in a social context that is complex and undergoing rapid change. The changes are linked mainly to the shifting learner profile, and this might be relevant to how Intermediate Phase teachers perform their role functions in catering for this diverse learner population, in literacy acquisition and development. The demographic profile of learners is presented in Table 4.1.

The categories listed in Table 4.1 were derived as follows. The Indian Community in KwaZulu-Natal is complex, and is grouped together for convenience under the designation of “Indian”, but consists of various religious denominations (mainly Hindus, Muslims and Christians, as derived from the Indian continent from whence they originated). The term “Blacks” is used to

group a range of indigenous groupings, for example Zulus, Vendas and Xhosas, all of which are native to Africa. The term “Coloured” refers to the people who are of mixed blood (i.e. of Blacks and Whites). The term “Whites” refers to people of European descent who were advantaged in the apartheid era (Sources: Schools Statistics).

Table 4.1 Demographics of learners at the selected schools in 2009

Schools		Milo Primary	Joel Primary	John Primary
Race	Indian	22%	20%	5%
	Blacks	76%	25%	95%
	Coloureds	2%	5%	0%
	Whites	0%	50%	0%
Home Language	English	27%	50%	5%
	Afrikaans	0%	20%	0%
	isiZulu	73%	30%	95%
Total Enrolment		1245	1550	1070

Table 4.2 Teacher participant profiles

SCHOOLS	PARTICIPANTS	FULL/PART-TIME ROLE	AGE	GENDER	YEARS OF SERVICE AT SCHOOL
Milo Primary (Semi-Urban)	Grade 4 Teacher	Full-time	49	Female	6
	Grade 5 Teacher	Full-time	44	Male	15
	Grade 6 Teacher	Full-time	41	Female	6
Joel Primary (Urban)	Grade 4 Teacher	Full-time	48	Male	9
	Grade 5 Teacher	Full-time	32	Female	13
	Grade 6 Teacher	Full-time	39	Male	18
John Primary (Rural)	Grade 4 Teacher	Full-time	55	Female	8
	Grade 5 Teacher	Full-time	45	Female	18
	Grade 6 Teacher	Full-time	34	Female	17

Table 4.2 presents information that describes the selected participants from the three case study schools. In terms of race, all participants are South African of

Indian, Black or White origin. Their years of service at the school were used as an indicator of how well the teachers knew their schools.

4.5.3 Population Group

Miles and Huberman (1984) state that qualitative studies tend to be more purposive in selection of population group or participants rather than randomly sampling the population, because research does not claim to be representative. The purpose of this study is to make sense of how the Intermediate Phase teachers function in the process of teaching and learning in literacy acquisition and development in the classroom. The literacy teachers are key role players in this study because they have experiential knowledge of literacy acquisition. The target group was the Intermediate Phase teachers in three public schools, which involves teachers of Grade 4, Grade 5 and Grade 6. All races were part of this study. In each school three teachers (i.e. one from each phase) participated in this study.

4.6 Data generation methods

Three methods of data generation were used in this study, namely, document analysis, semi-structured interviews and a survey. This use of multiple research instruments (i.e. document analysis in addition to semi-structured interviews and survey) was required to strengthen and to validate the data. Through the use of this multi-pronged approach the researcher was able to look for and identify inconsistencies as well commonalities or patterns.

4.6.1 Document analysis

Documents are an important source of data, and document analysis was used as descriptive research because current documents and issues were the focus of the researcher (Best & Kahn, 2003). The following documents were used as sources of data: minutes of literacy committee meetings, school literacy policies and class time-tables. In order to enhance the credibility of this project, the researcher combined the document analysis with the interview and survey data.

4.6.2 Semi-structured interviews

De Vos *et al.* (1998) argue that qualitative research is concerned with people's perspectives and their insights of the world. Seidman (1998) points out that interviewing is one of the best instruments for qualitative data generation. This is because Interviews afford the researcher the opportunity to engage in more depth with people than surveys or observation alone. A major advantage of the interview is its adaptability (Bell, 1993), whereby the researcher is able to follow up ideas from the interviewee's account and probe their responses. Hence the participant's responses in an interview can be clarified and developed immediately, whereas in a questionnaire the responses have to be taken at face value (Bell, 1993) because the participant is no longer present when the researcher sees the data for the first time. Interviews are an appropriate method for research designed with a critical realist perspective because they provide the opportunity to examine interactions.

The different types of interviews available include standardised, in-depth, ethnographic, elite, life history, focus groups, semi-structured, structured, exploratory, informal conversations, guide approaches group interviews, and closed quantitative interviews (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). The researcher used semi-structured interviews as one of her methods for data generation. The semi-structured interview is a suitable method for this case study for three reasons:

- In semi-structured interviews questions are open-ended and direct. The researcher's purpose in the interview is to ask the literacy teacher questions about their role functions in literacy acquisition and development. The nature of the interaction is qualitative in that it ranges from informal conversation to a more formal and lengthy question and answer dialogue. The exchange between the researcher and the "researched", that is the participant, is face-to-face and interpersonal (Kerlinger, 1992, p.441).

- Semi-structured interviews are flexible. This characteristic enables a researcher to gain clarity about responses that were unclear, and this allows probing further for in-depth information.
- Semi-structured interviews yield rich data. The researcher or interviewer can gain insight into the characters and intensity of the participants attitudes, beliefs, motives and feelings, and can detect underlying motivations (De Vos, Strydom, Fouche & Delport, 2002).

The interview questions were arranged from simple to complex so that the interviewee could adjust and closely follow the questions, which were open-ended and transparent. The researcher used guiding interview schedules (Seidman, 1998), consisting of already-constructed questions asking participants to reconstruct their experiences. The researcher used one interview schedule for teachers in Grade 4, Grade 5 and Grade 6 (see *Appendix C*). The interview schedule directly focused on answering the research questions to avoid “superfluous information” and “data overload” that might have compromised the “efficiency and power” of the researcher’s analysis (Huysamen, 2001, p.89). This allowed the researcher to probe the interviewees to dispel potential misunderstandings (Creswell, 2003, p.89). The use of probing questions also assisted her to progress smoothly and ask further questions as prompts to elicit from the informant information which the researcher may have overlooked. Probing allowed her to test the limits of the participants’ knowledge. It also encouraged co-operation, established rapport and made an accurate assessment of what the participants really believed. Use of the interview schedules led the researcher to think of interviews as communicative events aimed at finding what participants think, know and feel (Wilkinson & Birmingham, 2003).

Open-ended questions proved to be a useful way to elicit a variety of interesting responses; this particular kind of open-ended questioning is known as a “funnel” (Kerlinger, 1992, p.313), starting with broad questions and then narrowing down to more specific ones. The researcher found that the resulting descriptive and explanatory data created a rich understanding of Intermediate

Phase teachers' experiences. With this in mind, the researcher included the following issues in the teachers' interview schedule, derived from the research questions in order to shed light on literacy acquisition and development, with specific application to teacher training and support:

- Government literacy policies and its implementation at school level
- Changes in existing curriculum practice
- School's literacy policy
- Learners experience of literacy acquisition
- Interventions for Grade 4 - 6
- Accommodation of race/gender/culture of learners in the classroom
- Literacy acquisition and methodology in classroom practice
- Challenges in teaching literacy acquisition
- Methods of improving literacy
- Teacher experience in developing literacy competences
- The role of School Governing Body and community in implementing literacy acquisition
- Utilising expertise of the School Governing Body (SGB)
- Training of literacy teachers
- Challenges in teacher training and support.

The teachers' interview schedule (see Appendix C) consists of five main research questions about the literacy acquisition and development in the teaching and learning process in primary schools. Question one has sixteen sub-questions about how government literacy policies are implemented in classroom practice. Question two includes eleven sub-questions about how the learners experience the acquisition and development of literacy in the classroom. In question three there are eleven sub-questions about how teachers experience developing literacy competences in the classroom. Question four has ten sub-questions about the role the School Governing Body and the community play in facilitating literacy acquisition. Question five has fourteen sub-questions about teacher training and support for effective implementation of literacy acquisition.

In the field work the researcher followed Wilkinson & Birmingham's (2003) advice. Wilkinson and Birmingham (2003) state that the interview process should be planned and set up in three phases. The first phase is setting up the interview and finding participants according to the overall research design. The second phase is conducting and recording the interview and the third phase is reflecting on the interview and working with or analysing and interpreting the data. For the first phase Warren argues that an introductory meeting should be used briefly to inform participants about the purpose of the interview, make them feel at ease and give an explanation about the manner in which the interviews will be recorded. For this project, interviews were recorded and transcribed. The use of a sound recording device during interviews has advantages and disadvantages. For Patton (1990) it is indispensable because it keeps accurate records of the interview. Seidman (1998) states:

There is no question in my mind that in-depth interviews must be tape-recorded ... I believe that to work most reliably with the words of participants, the researcher has to transform those spoken words into a written text study. The primary method of creating text from interviews is to tape-record interviews and transcribe them (Seidman, 1998, p.70).

A disadvantage is that some participants might withhold certain information because they are afraid of a record of them revealing this information. In-depth interviews require participants to reconstruct their personal and lived experiences, and thus they may feel vulnerable when being recorded. For this reason, the researcher took care to reassure interviewees who expressed nervousness or concern about being recorded.

During the interviews the researcher took also notes to record her observations such as gestures, facial expressions, tone of voice and general body language (Henning, Van Rensburg & Smit, 2004, p.73). These nonverbal elements assisted the researcher to establish whether the participants were comfortable or not with the posed questions. Observation and note taking was also necessary, as this kind of information could not be captured solely by a tape recorder. This use of multiple research instruments (i.e. document analysis in addition to semi-structured interviews and survey) was required to strengthen and to validate the data. Through the use of this multi-pronged approach the

researcher was able to look for and identify inconsistencies as well commonalities or patterns.

Interviews were audio-taped and transcribed, as preparing the data for analysis required transcription of the audiotapes. The transcribed audiotapes present an account of the everyday happenings in teaching literacy in the classroom (Baker 1997c, Silverman, 2000). That is, through the convention adopted, the transcription produces “the character of the speech or activity” (Baker, 1997c, p.111). This understanding of the status of the transcript is in keeping with the assumption that there exist other interpretations of the lessons and interviews besides those analysed in this research. These versions are available not only through other means of data collection and analysis, but also through investigating the process of literacy acquisition and development in the transcript for different phenomena (Silverman, 2000). In critical realist terms, the transcript is a representation of the literacy data generated by the intransitive structures of primary education. Furthermore, its representational nature is determined through the choice of transcription convention, format of the transcript, and the level of detail (for example verbal and nonverbal behaviour). These choices have implications for analytic interpretation (Baker, 1997c) and the status of reliability of the study. That is, the interpretations of the literacy process in the transcripts represent the transitive knowledge and will depend upon the analytic tools used to interrogate the data.

4.6.3 Survey

The researcher conducted a descriptive survey (see Appendix D) to allow teachers to examine and describe the specific phenomenon with great accuracy as suggested by Leedy and Ormrod (2004). The survey was designed to elicit the needs and strengths of primary teachers in a structured and systematic manner, building on theory and previous research to improve the validity of the information. The survey was carried out before the interviews so as to contextualise or “frame” the rich data which was to be obtained in the interviews. In this study the researcher employed a quantitative and qualitative survey technique to obtain data. The items in the questionnaire were designed to collect information and to investigate literacy acquisition and development in

a demarcated geographical area. Items in the questionnaire were both closed-ended and open-ended in format, which provided mostly quantitative information but also limited qualitative data, respectively. Closed questions were frequently used in this survey for several reasons. According to Rea and Parker (1998) they are less onerous to the participant because a choice of responses is provided. Not only can this make the task of answering a question easier, it can also help to clarify the meaning of the question. This is important because when questions are understood, the likelihood of extraneous and irrelevant responses is lessened. Additionally, closed questions enhance the reliability and uniformity of responses thereby facilitating comparisons among participants” (Creswell, 2003). Fowler (1988) suggests that closed questions have the added advantage of simplifying data tabulation. Despite their strengths, closed questions can be inherently confusing for participants. They may also present problems when they are misunderstood or when a participant cannot find an appropriate response. Rea (1992) noted that under these circumstances, a participant might instead select an erroneous response.

This research study survey was conducted in one phase only. A self-administered survey questionnaire was delivered to the Intermediate Phase i.e. Grade 4-6 primary teachers in a Ward of 28 schools in the Ethekewini Region. The advantages of self-administered survey have been well documented and include increased anonymity for respondents and flexibility in terms of how, when and where the questionnaires are completed. In addition, because there is no interviewer, there is also no likelihood of interviewer bias (Babbie, 1973). However, according to Best (2003) lack of interviewer presence can in itself be problematic, as, if respondents require assistance with their survey, no one is present to help them (Best & Kahn, 2003). This situation can be partially remedied by inviting respondents to telephone those responsible for the survey should they have any queries.

The survey is a non-experimental, descriptive research method. Surveys can be useful when a researcher wants to collect data on phenomena that cannot be directly observed (such as opinions on literacy acquisition and development). The teachers’ survey questionnaire consisted of five main research questions

about the literacy acquisition and development in the teaching and learning process in primary schools. Question one has sixteen sub-questions (yes and no category) about how government literacy policies are implemented in classroom practice. Question two includes eleven sub-questions (yes and no category) about how the learners experience the acquisition and development of literacy in the classroom. In question three there are eleven sub-questions (yes and no category) about how teachers experience developing literacy competences in the classroom. Question four has ten sub-questions (yes and no category) about the role the School Governing Body and the community play in facilitating literacy acquisition. Question five has fourteen sub-questions (yes and no category) about teacher training and support for effective implementation of literacy acquisition.

It is important to design questions very carefully. A poorly designed questionnaire renders results meaningless. There are many factors to consider. Babbie (1973) gives the following pointers:

- Make items clear (don't assume the person you are questioning knows the terms you are using).
- Avoid double-barrelled questions (make sure the question asks only one clear thing).
- Respondent must be competent to answer (don't ask questions that the respondent won't accurately be able to answer).
- Questions should be relevant (don't ask questions on topics that respondents don't care about or haven't thought about).
- Short items are best (so that they may be read, understood, and answered quickly).
- Avoid negative items (if you ask whether librarians should not be paid more, it will confuse respondents).
- Avoid biased items and terms (be sensitive to the effect of your wording on respondents).

Busha and Harter provide the following list of 10 hints:

1. Unless the nature of a survey definitely warrants their usage, avoid slang, jargon, and technical terms.
2. Whenever possible, develop consistent response methods.
3. Make questions as impersonal as possible.
4. Do not bias later responses by the wording used in earlier questions.
5. As an ordinary rule, sequence questions from the general to the specific.
6. If closed questions are employed, try to develop exhaustive and mutually exclusive response alternatives.
7. Insofar as possible, place questions with similar content together in the survey instrument.
8. Make the questions as easy to answer as possible.
9. When unique and unusual terms need to be defined in questionnaire items, use very clear definitions.
10. Use an attractive questionnaire format that conveys a professional image (Busha & Harter, 1980).

As may be seen, designing good questions is much more difficult than it seems. One effective way of making sure that questions measure what they are supposed to measure is to test them out first, using small focus groups. The challenges and strengths of teachers were determined in a structured and systematic manner, building on theory and previous research to improve the validity of the information. It is the intention of this study to investigate literacy acquisition and development using a cross-sectional design of a survey to strengthen data collected from semi-structured interviews and documentation. The cross-sectional design collected data on the same set of variables for a period but involved comparable, rather than identical cases. Menard (1991) noted that the cross-sectional design allows for the measurement of literacy acquisition and development for well-defined groups of cases as long as the cases are comparable at the group level from one cross-section to the next. It is essential, however, that sampling and administration of the data collection is strictly replicated otherwise the comparability of data may be seriously compromised.

Surveys are an appropriate means of gathering data from a large number of individuals (e.g. Intermediate Phase teachers) and can be an efficient and practical means of data collection. According to Rea and Parker (1992), in situations when accurate information about large populations is required and enough is known about the population to formulate specific questions, there is no better method of research than the survey process. Fowler (1988) explained that because survey research employs questions and items that are consistent across individuals, it provides comparable information about respondents in a research study (Fowler, 1988).

The following are advantages of surveys:

- It is an efficient way of collecting information from a large number of respondents. Very large samples are possible. Statistical techniques can be used to determine validity, reliability, and statistical significance.
- Surveys are flexible in the sense that a wide range of information can be collected. They can be used to study attitudes, values, beliefs, and past behaviours.
- Because they are standardised, they are relatively free from several types of errors.
- They are relatively easy to administer.
- There is an economy in data collection due to the focus provided by standardized questions. Only questions of interest to the researcher are asked, recorded, codified, and analysed. Time and money is not spent on tangential questions.
- However, there are also disadvantages:
- They depend on subjects' motivation, honesty, memory, and ability to respond. Subjects may not be aware of their reasons for any given action. They may have forgotten their reasons. They may not be motivated to give accurate answers; in fact, they may be motivated to give answers that present themselves in a favourable light.
- Structured surveys, particularly those with closed ended questions, may have low validity when researching affective variables.

- Although the chosen survey individuals are often a random sample, errors due to non-response may exist. That is, people who choose to respond on the survey may be different from those who do not respond, thus biasing the estimates.
- Survey question answer-choices could lead to vague data sets because at times they are relative only to a personal abstract notion concerning ‘strength of choice’. For instance the choice “moderately agree” may mean different things to different subjects, and to anyone interpreting the data for correlation. Even yes or no answers are problematic because subjects may for instance put “no” if the choice “only once” is not available (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000; Welman & Kruger, 2001).

4.7 Data analysis methods

As mentioned above, the researcher combined the document analysis with the analysis of the interview and survey data. The latter were carried out as follows.

4.7.1 Data analysis for the survey

Quantitative data obtained from the questionnaires were coded and analysed by means of Microsoft Word spreadsheets. Prior to analyses, quantitative data were screened for accuracy of data entry. Descriptive statistics were employed to highlight the patterns or trends or themes related to this study, as well as use of the Whitney test to further investigate instances of skew or bias. The Whitney test is a hypothesis test procedure used to determine whether the two responses (yes/no) are different or similar within a probability level for non-normal data (i.e. resulting in a curve which is not bell-shaped, see Downie, 1974). In relation to open-ended responses, the process of qualitative analysis was based on data “reduction” and “interpretation” (Marshall & Rossman, 1989, p.113), in which participants statements were systematically reduced by searching for patterns or themes among the responses before being interpreted. The first stage in this process involved transcribing verbatim responses to each open-ended question relating to the research questions. Transcriptions for each question were then read to obtain a general sense of

information and to consider its overall meaning (Creswell, 2003). Data were then coded by organising the various responses to the topics or themes. These themes were then colour-coded and assigned descriptive labels or codes. As the themes emerged during analysis, the data were organised categorically. These categories were reviewed repeatedly and reduced by grouping themes that were related to each other. Numbers of responses within each category were then tabulated to provide a frequency statistic.

4.7.2 Data analysis for the semi-structured interviews

In qualitative case studies data analysis is an ongoing process (Best & Kahn, 2003). The researcher employed a descriptive analysis technique as outlined by Terre Blanche *et al.* (2006), this technique involves:

- Reading through the interview transcripts, jotting down notes and comments;
- Selecting the richest and thickest portions of interview transcripts;
- Listing the emerging themes and clustering and encoding them;
- Identifying the major themes and sub-themes;
- Analysing categories of the sub-themes and what they mean; (Terre Blanche, Durrheim & Painter, 2006, p.252).

Following this technique the researcher converted the field notes into transcriptions which were then organised into themes and sub-themes. The researcher's aim was to describe, interpret and explain the rich data. The procedure was methodical, structured and time consuming. The researcher used descriptive codes such as government literacy policies and implementation at school level, the school's literacy policy, learners' and teachers' experience, challenges in teaching literacy acquisition, training of teachers, utilising the expertise of the School Governing Body (SGB) and any other codes which emerged during the analysis. These codes enabled easy retrieval of information which would answer the research questions. The researcher analysed each case individually in its entirety prior to doing a cross-case analysis (Swann & Pratt, 2003). For example, in the cross case analysis the researcher looked for patterns such as similarities and differences, as well as disruptions or exceptions. The data used for this research were from the

interviews, document analysis and the survey on literacy acquisition and development. The results of these interactions provided the most suitable forms of data to examine the co-construction and constitution of literacy practices in the intermediate phase in primary education. Furthermore, the procedure was consistent with a critical realist approach in recognising that knowledge is produced through social interactions.

Research into literacy acquisition and development in classroom interactions shows how classroom knowledge is produced through various types of activities (Baker, 1991; Cressy, 1980). Studying the transcripts of interviews enables an analysis of how and what knowledge is produced. Scholars explain that while the teacher plans for learner's acquisition of specific knowledge in the process of teaching and learning, the knowledge that really counts is produced only during this process (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). This means that the curriculum and work schedules may provide broad parameters within which teachers re-contextualise the literacy knowledge. However, what really counts are the literate practices enacted within the lesson itself and in that particular context, as it is these literacy practices which are the focus of this study. Interview accounts can be analysed to show how the interviewee constructs order and makes sense of their social interactions (Dingwall, 1997). As such, interview accounts cannot be expected to reveal the "truth" about the reality under investigation (Silverman, 2000, Dingwall, 1997). Critical realists interpret the account as the transitive knowledge produced from the intransitive structure of the interview account. The knowledge is transitive because it is specific to each teacher and it is therefore relativist. This is compatible with social constructionist view that the knowledge produced is relativist. However, the critical realist researcher attempts to take this process one step further by attempting to arrive at the intransitive reality underpinning, and in a sense, giving rise to, the experiences reconstructed in the interviews.

4.8 Ethical considerations

To ensure that this research study met with ethical protocols, ethical clearance was obtained from Durban University of Technology prior to the commencement of data collection (see Appendix A). A letter of information and consent was

read and signed by all participants (see Appendix B). In this section the researcher discusses the rationale for being ethical, some ethical principles and how she dealt with them in this study. Research has an ethical-moral dimension in that the researcher has a moral and professional obligation to be ethical, even when the researched are unaware about ethics (Neuman, 2011). Basic principles of ethics in research are that ethical responsibility rests with the researcher, to protect participants from legal or other harm such as discomfort, and to honour all guarantees of privacy, confidentiality and anonymity. Anonymity and confidentiality are assured. Anonymity means that people remain nameless. If participant's identity remains unknown, the individual is protected through anonymity. Confidentiality means that information may have names attached to it, but the researcher holds it in confidence or keeps it secret from the public. The information is not released in a way that permits linking specific individuals. All of the participants chose not to disclose their schools and their names to prevent any harm to them as a result of revealing information or expressing opinions which might be objected to by school management or the DoE.

The researcher followed the correct ethical standard for this study as the consent letter entails other ethical issues that are relevant to this study. The participants were offered the opportunity to withdraw from the process at any stage and to ask questions, seek clarification on all the issues involved in this study. The participants were allowed to examine the transcripts and make any amendments they felt were necessary before final submission of this thesis. As vital stakeholders in this process, they were aware of the content. This consideration instils confidence in the participants as the researchers ensured that the consent given was informed and understood. It is important to have informed written consent from the participants to guarantee their agreement to participate in this study and to protect themselves. Informed consent must be obtained as "the voluntary consent of the human subject is absolutely essential" (Seidman, 1998, p.49). The researcher should refrain from coercing or humiliating, and deceiving participants in participating and releasing confidential details of the study with the published results, and making interpretations of results which are inconsistent with the data (Miles &

Huberman, 1994; Neuman, 2011). It is ethically unacceptable to use any form of coercion however subtle (Simon & Burnstein, 1984, p.112). In the final analysis, the ethical responsibility of the participants rests with the researcher. The researcher made a full disclosure to the participants of her intentions and the rationale behind this study (see Appendix A). Human interaction is the focus of her research, which meant that the necessary ethical measures were applied to protect the participants from harm.

The process of ethical clearance was as follows. Firstly, permission was sought from the Faculty Research Committee for ethical clearance, which required a letter of information and consent as well as completing the Faculty ethics form (see Appendices A and B). Secondly, the relevant authorities were contacted in order to obtain the necessary approval because this research involves the utilisation of three public schools. Therefore permission needed to be granted by the appropriate gatekeepers such as the school principals and teachers for the process before and after finalising the planning for the interviews with respondents. The purpose of permission seeking is to protect the participants, as well as the interests of the education authorities in terms of any unlawful information that might be used or any contravention of official procedures. Thirdly, informed consent needed to be obtained from the participants (see Appendix A) before embarking on data collecting. All the participants needed to be fully cognisant of the researcher's approach, procedures and scope of this study so that they were well aware of their role and rights as participants; they were assured about researcher's ethical standards and that no harm would come to them.

4.9 Measures to ensure trustworthiness

Qualitative research should be credible and dependable. This is referred to as trustworthiness. Trustworthiness strategies are linked to credibility, transferability, and dependability, all of which ensure rigour without sacrificing the relevance of the qualitative investigation (De Vos, Strydom, Fouche & Delpont, 2002; Guba & Lincoln, 1985).

4.9.1 Transferability

Transferability refers to the degree to which findings can be applied to other contexts and settings. To create a foundation for transferability and to allow other researchers to use the findings in making comparisons with their own work, it should contain an “accurate description of the research process, an explication of the arguments for the different choices of methods and a detailed description of the research situation and context” (Terre Blanche, Durrheim & Painter, 2006, p.381). In this study transferability is addressed via purposive sampling, where the participants were specifically selected based on their experience, insights and role of Intermediate Phase teachers. Participant checking is important therefore researcher sent interview transcripts to participants to be read and checked for inaccuracies or misrepresentation of their information before data analysis began. Human social life is too complex to be reduced to reliability testing formulae (Rubin & Rubin, 1995), and that is why other researchers of literacy acquisition and development have searched for contextually situated understandings (Bloch, 1999; Fleish, 2007; Naiker & Mbokazi, 2002). The degree of similarity and correspondence between the three selected schools contexts is satisfied because these data are descriptive and it allowed for comparison in this study.

4.9.2 Credibility

Credibility is about the researcher being honest and using suitable methods (Locke, Spirduso & Silverman, 2000). The researcher has to ensure that the data produced is an accurate representation of the real situation, as the researcher understands it. However, that analysis process is not value-free or free of the researcher’s bias; there is always the danger or risk of data contamination and distortion when the researcher adds his/her own information. Although human bias cannot be underestimated, nor can the notion of objectivity. Researchers should guard against bias rather than deny it, because the researcher’s values and theories stimulate the inquiry, and sustain it (Govender, 2007; Wolcott, 1995). “Disciplined subjectivity” refers to the same process of guarding bias as “conscious subjectivity” and “consensus” or “intersubjective agreement (Creswell, 2003, p.43). While these concepts are different, they can be seen as related by exploring the researcher’s role in

interpretative research. In exploring how the Intermediate Phase teachers' roles are interpreted and expressed the researcher was aware of possessing certain biases and preferences. She tried to overcome these biases by choosing three public schools with Intermediate Phase teachers and literacy committees. The same numbers of teacher were interviewed at each school. The same interview schedules were followed at the three schools. The same research instruments were used and the same documentation was analysed at the three schools. The researcher also attempted to minimise bias by using a participant validation strategy; this involved giving them the interview transcripts to read to check for this type of distortion.

4.9.3 Dependability

Dependability is enhanced where any inconsistency can be tracked back and ascribed to identified sources (Neuman, 2011). For example, in this study it would be understandable if the library committee members expressed different opinions from non-members. Dependability can be satisfied via cross-referencing, which means comparing data with other studies of a comparable and similar nature. Interpretive researchers such as Welman & Kruger (2001) believe that groups, organisations and individuals behave and express their opinions differently in changing contexts. They assume that the reality they are investigating is unstable and forever changing. Unlike Vulliamy and Web (1992), they do not expect to arrive at the same results repeatedly, and dependability is achieved through a rich and detailed description of how actions are rooted and develop out of contextual interaction (Welman & Kruger, 2001). In this study the generated data are considered to be dependable in terms of the years of professional experience of the teachers.

4.10 Critical realism and the methodology used

In summing up the research methodology, it is important to note that "interpretive" (as in approach or methodology) is not a position as such, and can fall under different research orientation or paradigms (see Yanow, 2003, p1). The methods described in this section are very similar, if not the same, as the kinds of methods used in interpretive approaches such as social constructivism.

However, when interpreting the significance of literacy acquisition and development and the teachers' accounts of their literacy teaching practices, certain assumptions are made. Essential to the production of their interviews and accounts are pre-existing patterns of literacy acquisition or social norms of acceptable interaction in schools. These may not be apparent at the surface level to the participants or initially to the researcher. Such assumptions about the nature of literacy acquisition between teachers and students and teachers and researchers in the school context are in keeping with the philosophical perspective of critical realism as developed by Bhaskar (1989). According to critical realism, these structures shaping the nature of the interaction are not immediately apparent from the interaction. In this research, the critical realist assumption is that these cultural norms or structures lie beneath the surface level interpretations of the interviews in the teaching and learning process of literacy or the teachers' accounts of their practice. According to critical realism, the social structures or mechanisms that constitute literacy acquisition and development in interaction in the classroom are termed intransitive, because they can be seen as stable patterns of talk and usually represent cultural norms (Bhaskar, 2008; Frazer, 1995; Joseph, 1998).

For example, when examining the classroom talk (i.e. reading for its meaning), the institutional nature of the communication and development (in this case, the social rules that constitute normative or acceptable patterns of classroom communication) must be considered. In classrooms, communication usually fits into a pattern whereby the teacher initiates the communications, the student responds and the teacher follows up with an evaluation and perhaps elaboration (Frazer, 1995; Joseph, 1998). In addition, the semi-structured nature of the interviews in this research meant that there was an implicit expectation that teachers would account for their answers and that the researcher might have queried those accounts further. Such foundational expectations about the type of literacy competences form intransitive knowledge and shape the institutional communication that is apparent in the interviews and classrooms. Pratt (2007) maintains that Bhaskar considered reasons and accounts as real ontological entities because the mechanisms which produce beliefs and actions are produced, exist and evolve in that social world.

These patterns of interaction and assumptions about literacy acquisition and development in the interview and classroom form intransitive knowledge. According to Bhaskar, the concepts intransitive and transitive forms of knowledge are used to accentuate the distinction between ontology and epistemology respectively (Joseph, 1998). Frazer (1995) explains that examples of transitive knowledge can include facts, concepts and categories but that these can ultimately change or vary according to cultural contexts. For example, in this study, although there is similarity in the basic structures of literacy acquisition and development from lesson to lesson and interview to interview, the understandings about literacy teaching practice created through those interactions may vary (Baker, 1991). The knowledge constructed is transient, it is transitive; the world revealed (partially, that is) by means of that knowledge, while itself in a state of becoming, is intransitive, that is, not the product of human thought.

Critical realism could be said to have a realist ontology but a constructivist epistemology. The main difference between critical realist and social constructivist perspectives concerns the existence or otherwise of external structures which might influence social interaction. In critical realism the structures are the explanatory source of the interaction (Crothers, 1998; Frazer, 1995; Joseph, 1998) which generates various behaviours. Such causal structures are not part of the social constructivist approach, which does however see pattern theories - or hypotheses - as the product of research; critical realists see patterns not as the final research product but as evidence of real systems and structures generating events and experiences, of which humans see mainly the surface manifestations. Hence the assumption that a structure, be it an institution of society or a social practice, plays a role in the construction of the social phenomenon under investigation, albeit in very different ways. According to the critical realist philosophy, there is interplay between humans and the structures within which they live their lives (Crothers, 1998). People are positioned by the structures, but at the same time, constitute them through their participation in activities relevant to those structures (Crothers, 1998; Frazer, 1995; Joseph, 1998). Therefore human interactions can change, replicate or constitute the social structures (Crothers, 1998; Frazer,

1995; Joseph, 1998). According to Bhaskar, in their conscious activities people unconsciously reproduce and occasionally transform the structures governing their substantive activities of production. Bhaskar's model advocates that:

People do not create society. For it always pre-exists them and is a necessary condition for their activity. Rather, society must be regarded as an ensemble of structures, practices and conventions which individuals reproduce or transform, but which would not exist unless they did so. Society does not exist independently of human activity (the error of reification). But it is not the product of it (the error of voluntarism) (Bhaskar, 1989, p.36).

Constructivism is a philosophy which suggests that knowledge is developed, or constructed, by the individual and is socially mediated. The constructivist classroom is a learner centred environment where knowledge is constructed through student interaction with materials, other students and the facilitator. The facilitator "facilitates at the metacognitive" level, providing initiative, guidance, and scaffolding (or bridging) to help extend the learners' zone of proximal development (Herrington, Herrington, Oliver, Stoney & Willis, 2001, p.266). Warschauer referred to constructivist learning as "a process of collaborative apprenticeship, [where] students work together, under the guidance of a teacher, to support their own learning and development" (Warschauer, 1998). Learners participate in knowledge acquisition through the construction of new models of knowledge, refined through cooperative social activity within the class environment. Critical realism offers the perspective that there are underlying structures, interpreted as social relations, within any institution. In terms of this research, those can be related to the patterns of talk evident in classrooms and interviews. Moreover, in the Bernsteinian (1990) model of pedagogic practice, different types of interactions serve particular purposes in the teaching/learning process. For example, the regulative discourse described earlier, refers to those interactions concerned with establishing, transforming, or maintaining the moral order. These different types of interaction can be seen as the underlying structures, and while they do not necessarily generate interaction (as critical realism might suggest), they do provide a means of understanding the teaching practice. A constructivist teaching and learning orientation enhances the process for the learner, and therefore represents an improvement from the positivist paradigm. However,

from a research perspective constructivism poses problems, notably its focus on individuals and the epistemic fallacy. The ensuing plurality of worlds is unable to support justification for the introduction of teaching enhancements (i.e. interventions). Critical realism is highly compatible with a constructivist teaching approach, but has “additional ontological dimensions which are helpful in pointing the way to social transformation” (Gutteridge, 2006; Pratt, 2007, p.2). The researcher’s preference is for an emancipatory science, one which helps people understand the constraints upon and consequences of their actions and thereby assists them in choosing and acting wisely.

4.11 Conclusion

This chapter showed how the research questions 1 to 3 shaped the chosen methodology, and why case studies were selected as part of the research design. The research design and methodology were predicated on the existence of social mechanisms, for example social systems, social structures and specific interventions by various agents that might impact on literacy acquisition and development. The researcher was attempting to establish the causal factors generated by the systems/structures/mechanisms impacting on the process of literacy acquisition and development in the Intermediate Phase. An explanation was given of the data generation procedure, a description of participants involved and analysis methods through semi-structured interviews, as well as a survey questionnaire based on the research questions. There was a description of the school sites and the criteria that the researcher used to select them. The researcher motivated the reasons for using the semi-structured interview, survey and document analysis to generate data from participants at the three institutions. The design of the research instruments, data collection, transcripts and analytic procedures compatible with the understanding of critical realism was provided. The analytical approach offered by thematic coding was described. This chapter also included a discussion on ethics and issues of entry into the school sites and concluded with a discussion on transferability and concluded by discussing the relationship between critical realism and social constructivism. In the next chapters the researcher discusses the analysis of the quantitative and qualitative data.

CHAPTER FIVE

ANALYSIS OF QUANTITATIVE DATA

“Historically, social forces did affect the nature of literacy” (Leu et al, 2004).

5.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the findings resulting from the quantitative data analysis. These answers to the research questions are then interrogated at a number of different levels. Statistics are presented on the complete data set for all the questions from the questionnaires (see Appendix D). It will be shown that, while general trends emerged, these presented anomalies in the forms of skews and bias which, while suggesting serious problems with literacy acquisition and development (LAD), did not satisfactorily explain the reasons for these. The trends and anomalies did, however, suggest areas to follow up in the qualitative data analysis given in Chapter 6.

5.2 Overview of survey conducted

To recap briefly on the quantitative data gathering, the researcher conducted a descriptive survey (see Appendix D) to allow teachers to examine and describe their experiences about literacy acquisition and development at school level. The survey was carried out before the interviews, so as to contextualise or “frame” the rich data which was obtained in the case studies. The interviews could then be used to probe the rationale for these trends, in particular, to identify any significant tendencies which might emerge under the various themes (see Figure 5.1.). The items in the questionnaire were designed to collect information, and to investigate literacy acquisition and development in a demarcated geographical area. Questionnaire items were both closed-ended and open-ended in format, which provided mostly quantitative information but also limited qualitative data, respectively.

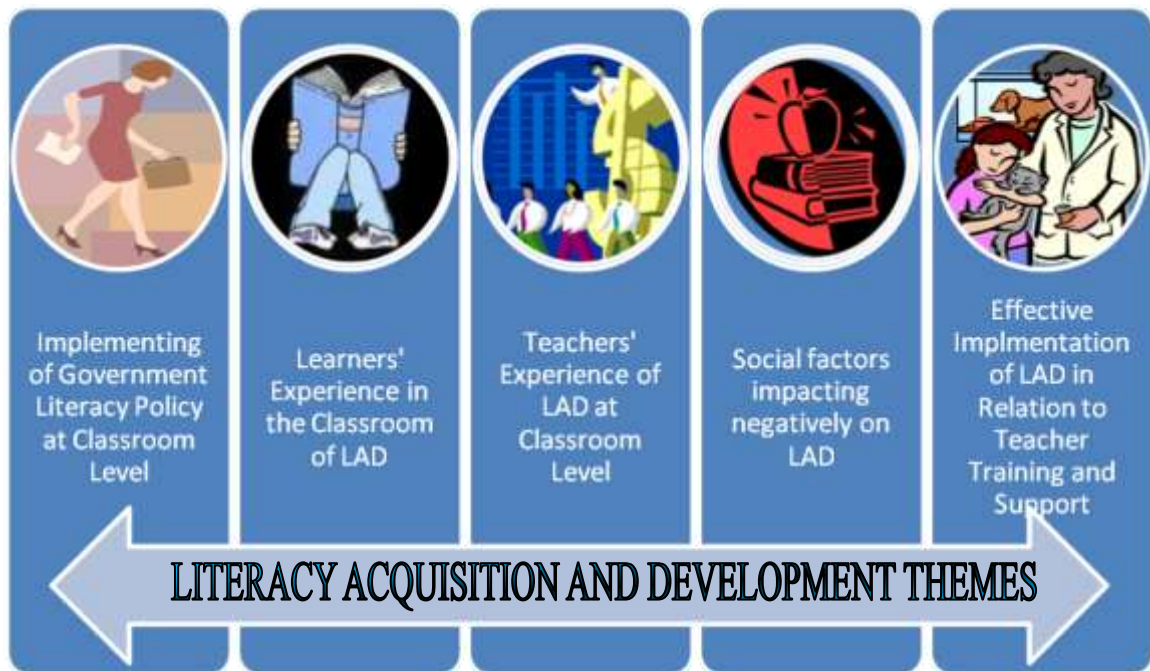


Figure 5.1 The five main themes involved in LAD

Closed questions were used frequently in this survey for several reasons. According to Rea and Parker (1998) they are less onerous to the participant because a choice of responses is provided. Not only can this make the task of answering a question easier, it can help to clarify the meaning of the question.

The survey was conducted as one round of questions only. Self-administered survey questionnaires were delivered to the Intermediate Phase i.e. Grade 4 - Grade 6 primary teachers in a Ward of 28 schools in the Ethekwini Region on 1 December 2008 and thirty-three were collected and analysed on the 1 March 2009. The results below (summarised as raw results in Table 5.1) came from the teacher's survey questionnaire, which consisted of five main research questions about the literacy acquisition and development in the teaching and learning process in primary schools. Question one had sixteen sub-questions ("yes" and "no" category) *about how government literacy policies are implemented in classroom practice.*

Table 5.1 Raw results from the survey questionnaire grouped per theme

THEMES	YES	NO
IMPLEMENTATION OF GOVERNMENT LITERACY POLICY AT CLASSROOM LEVEL		
Understanding of literacy policy	3	30
Changes in curriculum practice in literacy	10	23
Involvement of DoE in implementing policy	5	28
Accessibility of policy to teachers	3	30
Teachers implementing literacy policy	10	23
SMT monitoring LAD	10	23
Grade 4-6 successful intervention programmes	15	18
Policy catering for learner diversity	20	13
LAC work shopping LLC on LAD	10	23
LEARNERS' EXPERIENCE OF LAD IN THE CLASSROOM		
Pre-requisite for basic LAD competencies	20	13
Teaching learners to improve reading	33	0
Group work	4	29
LAD implementation enhancing learners' levels	10	23
LAD hindering learners' levels	5	28
Difficulty in reading	33	0
Inadequate reading resources	23	10
Relevant resources	5	28
Catering for varying ability levels of LAD	16	17
Accommodating race and gender	30	3
Mother-tongue hindering LAD	23	10
Learners ability hindering LAD	18	15
Learners bad attitude affecting LAD	28	5
TEACHERS' EXPERIENCE OF LAD IN THE CLASSROOM		
Teachers confident in implementing LAD	0	33
Experiencing problem with LAD	5	28
Comfortable in implementing LAD	0	33
Inadequate training	33	0
Level of teachers' competence	4	29
Adequate LAD skills	0	33
Learners' mother-tongue hamper LAD	31	2
Catering for disadvantage learners	2	31
Grouping learners per language	4	29
SOCIAL FACTORS IMPACTING NEGATIVELY ON THE PRACTICE OF LAD		
SGB promotes LAD	6	27
Incapacity of SGB for implementing LAD	3	30
SGB handling problems relating to LAD	33	0
SGB allocating funds for LAD resources	33	0
EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF LAD IN RELATION TO TEACHER TRAINING & SUPPORT		
Qualified literacy educators	3	30
Specific training for effective implementation of LAD	33	0
Support for effective implementation of LAD	33	0
Receiving current support for LAD	10	23
Challenges with:		
Teachers' workload	33	0
Teachers' unions	29	4
Lack of teachers, personnel, library resources	13	0

Question two included eleven sub-questions (“yes” and “no” category) about *how the learners experience the acquisition and development of literacy in the classroom*. In question three there were eleven sub-questions (“yes” and “no” category) about *how teachers experience developing literacy competences in*

the classroom. Question four had ten sub-questions (“yes” and “no” category) about *the role the School Governing Body and the community play in facilitating literacy acquisition.* Question five has fourteen sub-questions (“yes” and “no” category) about *teacher training and support for effective implementation of literacy acquisition.*

Table 5.1 shows raw scores from the quantitative survey. This is before any statistical analysis had taken place, but analysis-by-theme already suggested significant trends, which will be dealt with by statistical analysis before school groupings (i.e. in another ward) are considered in the qualitative follow up (i.e. in Chapter 6). The statistical analysis was done so as to capture general trends as well as any skewing or anomalies before necessarily attributing these to the specific school contexts.

Table 5.2 Intermediate phase teachers’ profile

GENDER	MALES	FEMALES		
	10	23		
QUALIFICATIONS	M+4	B.Ed. Hons	M.Ed.	BLANK
	15	8	3	7
YEARS OF TEACHING EXPERIENCE	7 TO 10 YEARS	10 TO 15 YEARS	15 TO 20 YEARS	20 TO 25 YEARS
	3	15	6	9

It must be remembered that the survey was carried out in a ward, and the interviews were conducted in three schools in a different ward (but in the same district). In comparison with the interview demographics there is a commonality when it comes to females dominating the teaching field in the Intermediate Phase, moreover the years of service range from seven to twenty five years showing that there are many experienced teachers in this phase (see Table 5.2). Nearly 55% of the teachers had completed a degree/diploma (i.e. M+4). However, some teachers did not respond to their qualification status, leaving it blank.

5.3 Analysis of survey results

In this section the data analysis from the 33 questionnaires is presented under the headings provided by the five main themes as in Tables 5.1 and 5.2. However, the sub-themes used to interpret the data were taken from those which emerged in the *qualitative data analysis* (see Chapter 6), given in Table 5.2. The reason for giving the overall picture per ward was to reveal any trends, particularly of statistical skew or bias, before considering any contextual factors which might be linked to individual school settings (as will be shown in the qualitative analysis). The reason for grouping these according to the sub-themes which emerged only later was to facilitate accounting for any trends, skews or bias when dealing with the qualitative data in the next chapter. The analysis of the qualitative data from the three schools will be used later to suggest possible reasons for any the trends or anomalies emerging in the quantitative data.

5.3.1 Implementation of government literacy policy at classroom level

The first theme is *Implementation of government literacy policy at classroom level* with nine sub-themes as indicated in Figure 5.1. The respondents answered the questionnaires with “yes” and “no” responses. 9% of the respondents responded “no” and 91% responded “yes” to *Understanding literacy policy*. The inference that can be made here is that the respondents believed that they did not understand the policy, indicating a gap in understanding. There were 30% “yes” and 70% “no” to *Changes in curriculum practice in literacy*, while the responses to *Involvement of DoE implementing policy* were 15% “yes” and 85% “no”. 91% “no” responses to *Accessibility of policy to teachers* and 9% “yes” suggest that a high percentage of teachers did not have this policy. 30% of the respondents agreed that they were *Implementing the literacy policy* and a higher percentage (70%) of teachers said that they were not implementing this policy. 70% of the respondents responded “no” when it concerned the *SMT monitoring of LAD* and 30% said “yes”. Only 45% responded “yes” to *Grade 4-6 successful intervention programmes* while a bigger percentage, 55% said “no”. 61% responses agreed that there was a

Policy catering for learner diversity and 39% said “no”. A major concern was that 70% responded “no” to *LAC work shopping LLC on LAD* and 30% “no”.

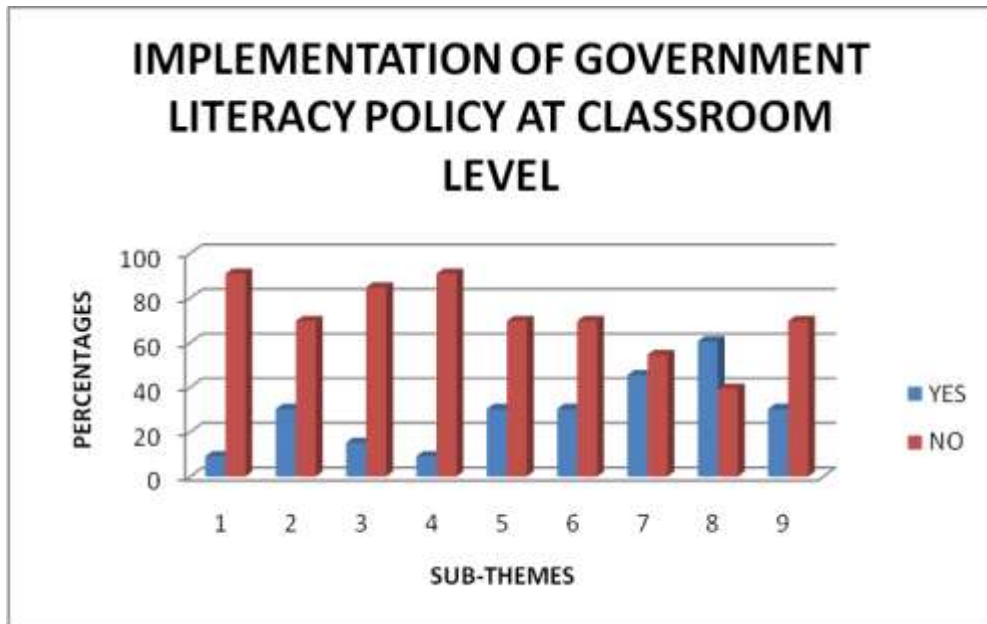


Figure 5.2 Implementation of government literacy policy at classroom level

Using inferential statistics, it can be seen that the above two samples (yes/no) are not normally distributed. The Whitney test (see Table 5.3) was then used on the results shown in Figure 5.2 to determine the difference between the two samples (yes/no).

Table 5.3 Whitney test results for implementation of government literacy policy at classroom level

n1	n2	U	P (two-tailed)	P (one-tailed)
9	9	78.0	0.000287948	0.000143974
normal approx z = 3.31133			0.000928534*	0.000464267*

*These values are approximate.

The difference between the two samples is highly significant: $P < 0.001$, as a result of the two-tailed test, taking both ends of the bell curve into account. The two-tailed test is a normal distribution test taking into account the whole distribution of the sample. This indicates that the two samples are

fundamentally different and must be explained by probing the same issues further, using a qualitative approach. However the mean for the “no” sample is significantly higher than the mean for the “yes” sample: this indicates that the government literacy policy at classroom level was not being implemented to a large extent (see Jones, 2011). Also, the “no” responses graph is skewed to the left while the “yes” graph is skewed to the right. It seems that responses elicited from certain schools were uniquely different from those in other schools. The researcher needed to look at the qualitative data and analysis for a possible explanation of the teachers’ very different experiences of implementation of government literacy policy (i.e. for LAD) in the classroom.

5.3.2 Learners’ experience of LAD in the classroom

The second theme is *Learners’ experience of LAD in the classroom*, with 13 sub-themes as indicated in Figure 5.3. The respondents once more answered the questionnaires with “yes” and “no” responses. 39% of the respondents responded “no” to Pre-requisite for basic LAD competencies 61% responded “yes”, this indicated that a higher number of teachers acknowledge that learners do require basic competencies in LAD. There were some significantly high responses, for example, a 100% “yes” for teaching learners to improve reading. This response indicates that learners are having problems with reading. 88% responses were given to implementing group work in class and 12% indicated “no”. The finding in LAD implementation enhancing learners’ levels indicated 30% “yes” and 70% “no” signifying that LAD was assisting a small number of learners. 15% responses were a showed “yes” to LAD hindering learners’ levels while 85% confirmed this response. 100% responded “yes” to learners experiencing difficulty in reading. 70% responses came for the “yes” to Inadequate reading resources, showing that only 30% of our schools have adequate schools. A 15% “yes” response for relevant resources raises a major concern because 85% of the schools appear to be implementing LAD without relevant resources. There were 48% “yes” responses for catering for varying ability levels of LAD and 52% “no” responses. It was encouraging to note 91% “yes” responses to accommodating race and gender indicating that only 9% did not include this item at classroom level. Another concern was 70% “yes” responses when it came to mother-tongue hindering LAD, showing that only

30% of the learners were not affected by mother-tongue. This response was 55% “yes” to learners’ ability hindering LAD and 45% “no” responses. This response of 85% “yes” to learners’ negative attitude affecting LAD suggests that teachers experienced challenges at classroom level in implementing LAD because only 15% of the learners had a positive attitude to LAD.

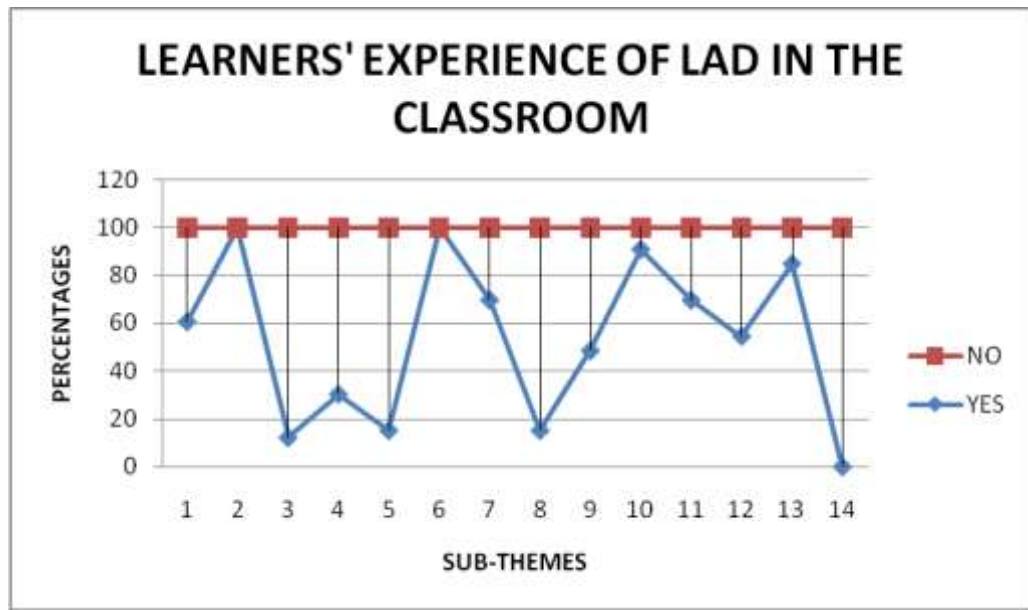


Figure 5.4 Learners’ experience of LAD in the classroom

In order to understand the distribution of the yes/no responses, a histogram was drawn up (see Figure 5.5).

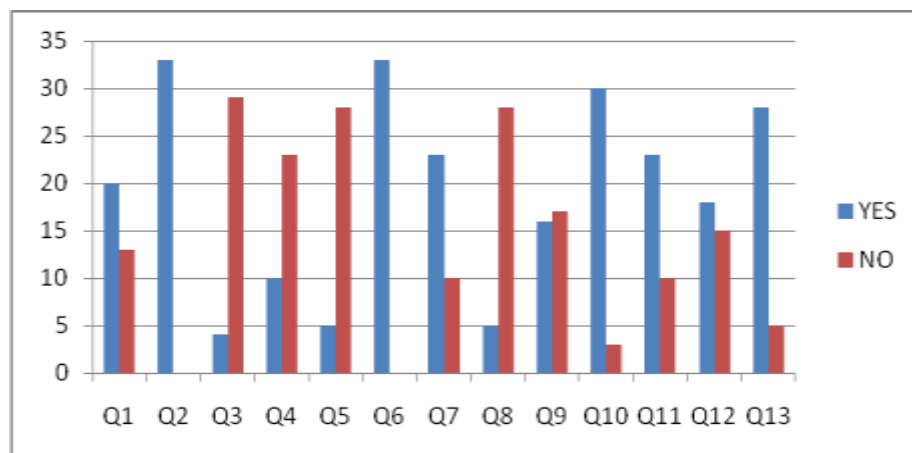


Figure 5.5 Histogram of learners’ experience of LAD in the classroom

It can be seen that the yes/no samples are not distributed normally. Hence the Whitney test was used, with the results being shown in Table 5.5.

Table 5.4 Whitney test results for learners' experience of LAD in the classroom

n1	n2	U	P (two-tailed)	P (one-tailed)
13	13	110.0	0.203542	0.101771
normal approx z = 1.30769			0.1909776*	0.0954888*

*These values are approximate.

The two samples are different, as shown where $P \geq 0.05$ in the two-tailed test. $P \geq 0.05$ indicates a larger difference than in the previous category. The two samples exhibited very different responses. This bias could be attributed to the fact that some schools had more “no” than “yes” answers owing to different sets of experiences with respect to LAD. This was not captured in the histogram in Figure 5.5 or Table 5.5 (i.e. on *learners' experience of LAD in the classroom*), but is shown in the graphs in Figure 5.4. The responses exhibited bimodal properties. This implies that groups of questions elicited high and low responses twice in the graph. There seems to be a disconnect between LAD experiences within the “yes” sample and “no” sample. It was hoped that the qualitative studies might reveal how contextual issues in three different schools (i.e. not the same ones as in the ward) might have resulted in the trends displayed here.

5.3.3 Teachers' experience of LAD in the classroom

The 100% “no” response to teachers being confident in implementing LAD suggests that teachers are experiencing problems with implementing LAD. This is supported by the 100% “no” responses to teachers feeling comfortable in implementing LAD. It is further confirmed by the 100% “yes” response to having inadequate training and adequate LAD skills for the successful implementation of LAD. These figures strongly suggest that teachers are experiencing problems at school level when it comes to implementing LAD.

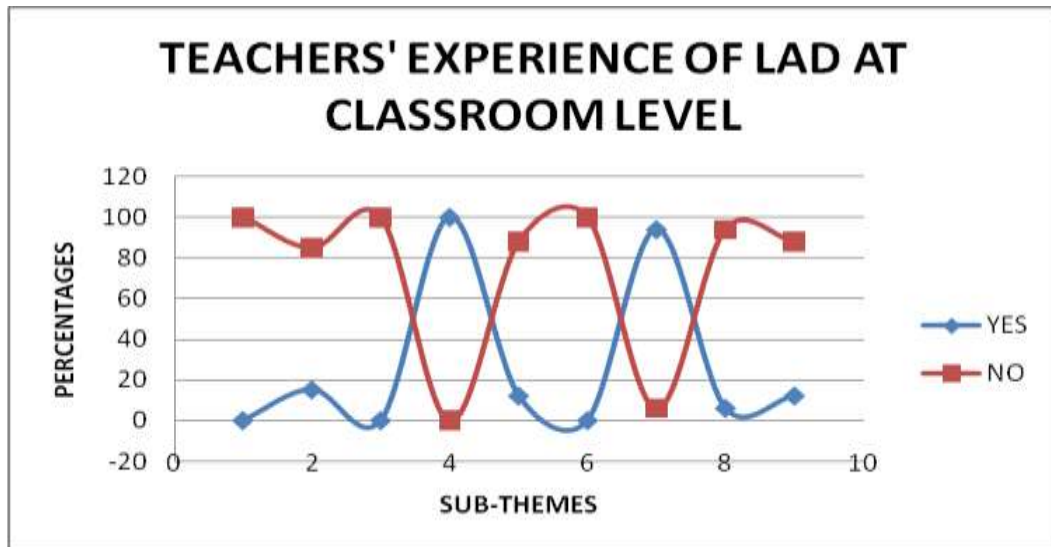


Figure 5.6 Teachers' experience of LAD in the classroom

There was a 12% "yes" response to the level of teachers' competence, showing a large percentage (88%) of the teachers felt incompetent when it came to facilitating LAD. It is disturbing to note that 94% of respondents indicated that the learners' mother-tongue hampers implementation of LAD. Another alarming response was that only 6% responded that they were catering for disadvantaged learners, suggesting that 94% were not. There were 12% "yes" responses in relation to grouping learners per language and 88% "no" responses, which suggested an inability of the part of staff to cater for different language groups.

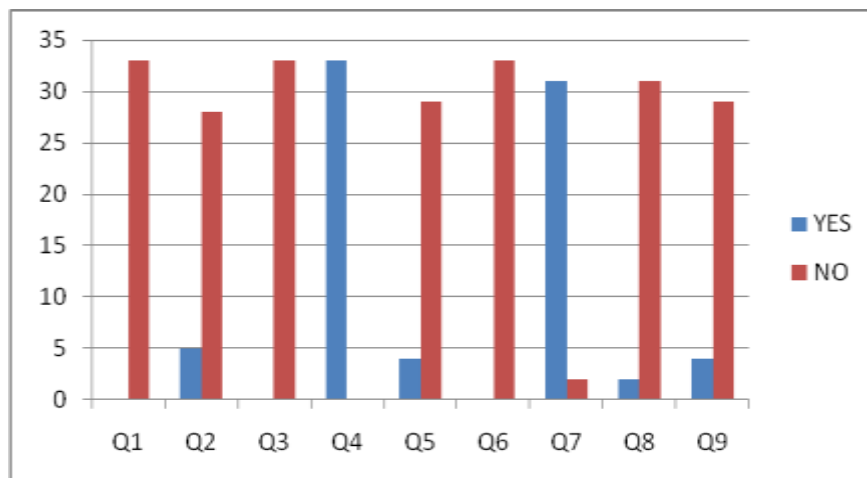


Figure 5.7 Histogram of teachers' experience of LAD in the classroom

The histogram in Figure 5.7 shows that the two samples are not normally distributed. Hence the Whitney test was used. Table 5.5 shows that the two samples are different (shown by $P \geq 0.05$ in the two-tailed test). The samples' means are significantly different. Again, the researcher needed to look at the qualitative data and analysis for a possible explanation of the teachers' exhibited random experiences of LAD in the classroom.

Table 5.5 Whitney test results for teachers' experience of LAD in the classroom

n1	n2	U	P (two-tailed)	P (one-tailed)
9	9	59.0	0.1134924	0.0567462
normal approx z = 1.63359			0.102345*	0.0511725*

*These values are approximate.

5.3.4 Social factors impacting negatively on the practice of LAD

Only 18% of the educators responded "yes" to the question as to whether SGBs were promoting LAD, indicating that a high percentage (82%) of the SGBs was not promoting LAD.

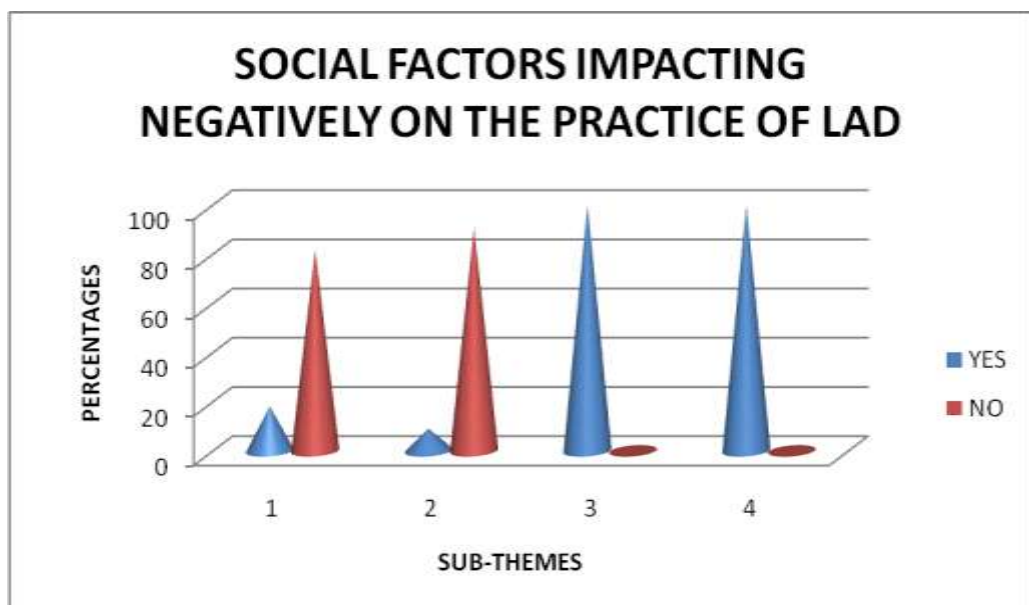


Figure 5.8 Social factors impacting negatively on the practice of LAD

Yet 91% indicated that the SGBs needed the capacity for implementing LAD, which gives rise to some concern. This finding suggests that only 9% of our SGBs had the capacity to implement LAD. The next two findings are critical because there were 100% responses that there was *no* SGB handling of problems relating to LAD and that the SGB was not allocating funds for LAD resources.

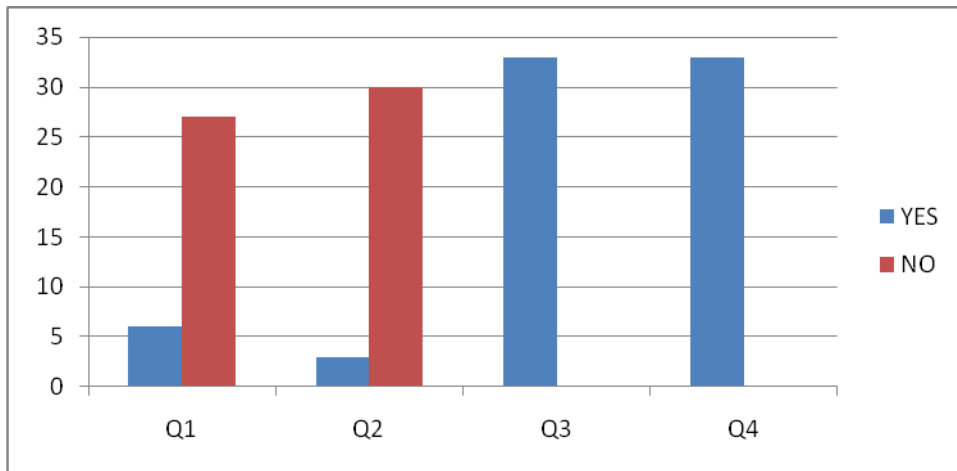


Figure 5.9 Histogram showing social factors impacting negatively on the practice of LAD

The histogram (Figure 5.9) shows that the samples were not normally distributed. Hence the Whitney test was used.

Table 5.6 Whitney test results for showing social factors impacting negatively on the practice of LAD

n_1	n_2	U	P (two-tailed)	P (one-tailed)
4	4	12.0	0.342858	0.171429
normal approx $z = 1.1547$			0.248214*	0.124107*

*These values are approximate.

The two samples are significantly different (as $P \geq 0.05$, two-tailed test). This indicates a bias in the sample, as the responses indicate different experiences.

The “yes” and “no” graphs are highly skewed: the “no” is skewed to the left and the “yes” is skewed to the right. The skewness implied that the researcher might (i.e. in the qualitative analysis) find schools with inherent social factors which would indicate different experiences per school.

5.3.5 Effective implementation of LAD in relation to teacher training and support

91% responded “no” to having qualified literacy educators in their schools while only a small percentage 9% indicated having literacy teachers. The next two sub-themes show a 100% “yes” response to specific training for effective implementation of LAD being essential, and for needing support for effective implementation of LAD at school level. Only 30% of respondents indicated they were receiving current support for LAD while the bigger percentage of 70% said they did not receive any support for LAD. There was a 100% response to the notion that the teachers did have a heavy workload, while 88% of the respondents indicated “yes” to teacher unions having a negative impact on LAD. Only 39% of the respondents indicated there was a lack of teachers, personnel and library resources (see Jones, 2011 and Maluleka, 2010) for the implementation of LAD.

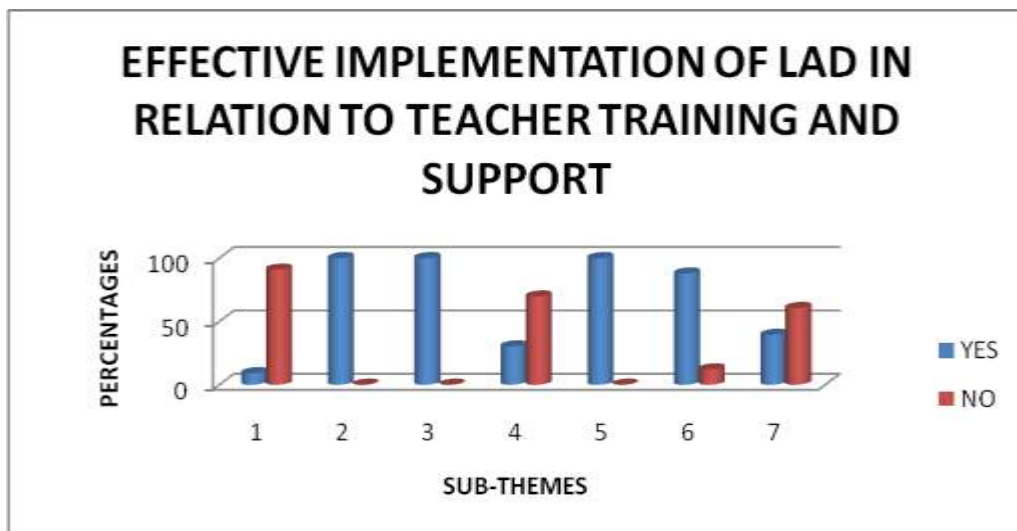


Figure 5.10 Effective implementation of LAD in relation to teacher training and support

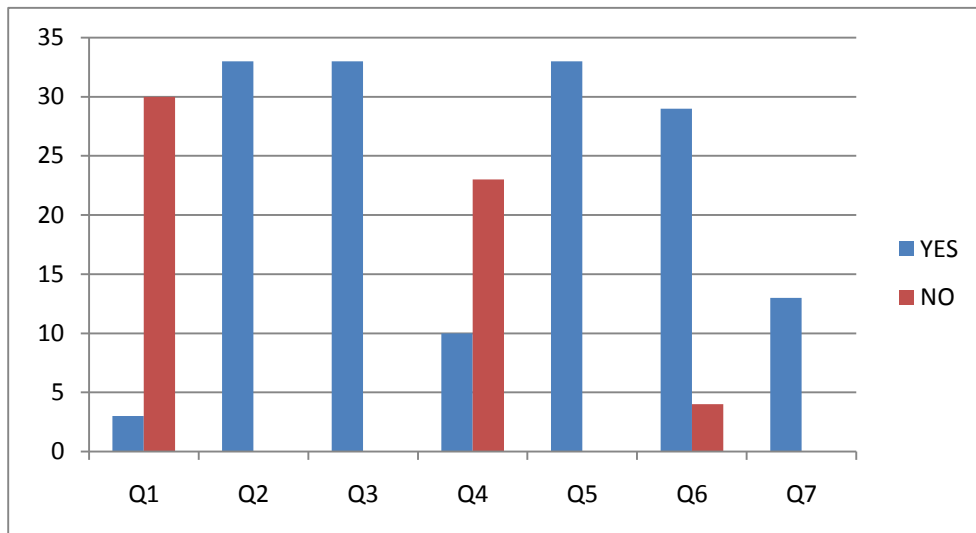


Figure 5.11 Histogram showing effective implementation of LAD in relation to teacher training and support

In the histogram (Figure 5.11) the “yes” graph is bimodal and stable in shape, but the “no” graph is decreasing and unstable in shape. There seems to be some bias in the “no” responses.

Table 5.7 Whitney test results for figures showing effective implementation of LAD in relation to teacher training and support

n1	n2	U	P (two-tailed)	P (one-tailed)
7	7	41.0	0.0378788	0.0189394
normal approx z = 2.10829			0.0350056*	0.0175028*

*These values are approximate.

The difference between the two samples is significant (shown by $P < 0.05$ in the two-tailed test), showing the responses are significantly different. This implies that the responses from the samples are independent, i.e. the “yes” and “no” are not related. The “yes” responses appear to be emanating from different sets of experiences and cognition. Once more, answers were sought from the qualitative data obtained in three different school contexts.

5.4 Conclusion

The conclusion sums up the general trends which emerged in the analysis of the quantitative data. In particular, the anomalies that were presented in the forms of skews and bias suggested there were major problems with implementing LAD at school level.

As far as *Implementation of government literacy policy at classroom level* is concerned, in the graph in Figure 5.2 the data had skewed more towards the left, and the mean was higher, suggesting the following pattern: policies were set in place but not implemented in actual practice. This emerging pattern must be qualified by the fact that not all teachers from the other grades were included in the survey, only from grades 4-6, which indicates the limitations of these conclusions.

In *Teachers' experience of LAD in the classroom*, the two samples indicate a bias in that different responses were recorded in the histogram (Figure 5.7). This bias could be attributed to the fact that some schools had more "no" than "yes" answers. This might have been caused by different sets of experiences with respect to LAD because they were of different levels; some schools could have had more resources than others, as the schools in the ward were not evenly matched, and teachers in one school may well have had better experiences than those in others.

In the histogram in Figure 5.5, relating to *Learners' experience of LAD in the classroom*, the data represented showed bias in opinions of learners' academic performance. Again, these opinions might have been based on the varied experiences they had within the classroom in implementing LAD and assessing its impact on learners' academic performance.

A skew is reflected in the number of "yes" responses in the *Social factors impacting negatively on the practice of LAD*. The difference between the two samples is significant (i.e. shown by $P < 0.05$ in the two-tailed test, in Table 5.6). This implies that the responses from the samples are independent (i.e. the "yes" and "no" are not related). The "yes" responses appear to be emanating

from different sets of experiences and cognition. Once more, possible answers needed to be sought from the qualitative data obtained in the three different school contexts discussed in the next chapter. *Effective implementation of LAD in relation to teacher training and support* showed that the “no” responses had some bias, as the graph is highly skewed to the left.

In the next chapter the qualitative data will be explored in an attempt to confirm and, where possible, find possible reasons for the trends indicated in the quantitative data analysis.

CHAPTER SIX

ANALYSIS OF QUALITATIVE DATA

“The absence of a culture of reading is a major concern in South African society” (Govender, 2007).

6.1 Introduction

This chapter first looks at the context of the qualitative data gathering, which was carried out in different ward from that canvassed in the survey. The research design and methodology were predicated on the existence of social mechanisms, for example social systems, social structures and specific interventions by various agents that might impact on literacy acquisition and development. Thus, after giving an overview of the themes as related to the research questions, and the sub themes which were formulated as a result of interrogating the qualitative data, the researcher gives an account of the various factors impacting on the process of literacy acquisition and development in the Intermediate Phase. A complex picture of layered causal factors emerges, generated by the various social mechanisms involved, including social systems, structures and specific interventions by various social agencies.

6.2 Context of the qualitative data gathering

To recap briefly on the gathering of qualitative data, this was gleaned from audio-taped interviews conducted with nine intermediate phase teachers. However, the schools involved were not those involved in the survey. To explore in more depth contextual issues which might impact on LAD, schools in three different contexts (representing three different types of public school in the Ethekwini Region District: Milo Primary school (semi-urban), Joel Primary School (ex-Model C), and John Primary School (rural)). Data was collected from nine Intermediate Phase Grade 4, Grade 5 and Grade 6 teachers. In each school three teachers (i.e. one from each phase) participated in the interviews. To gather data the researcher used one interview schedule for teachers in

Grade 4, Grade 5 and Grade 6 (see Appendix C). The information in Figure 6.1 shows the participant profile of the nine Intermediate Phase teachers according to the following factors: location of the school, years of service, race, gender and grade.

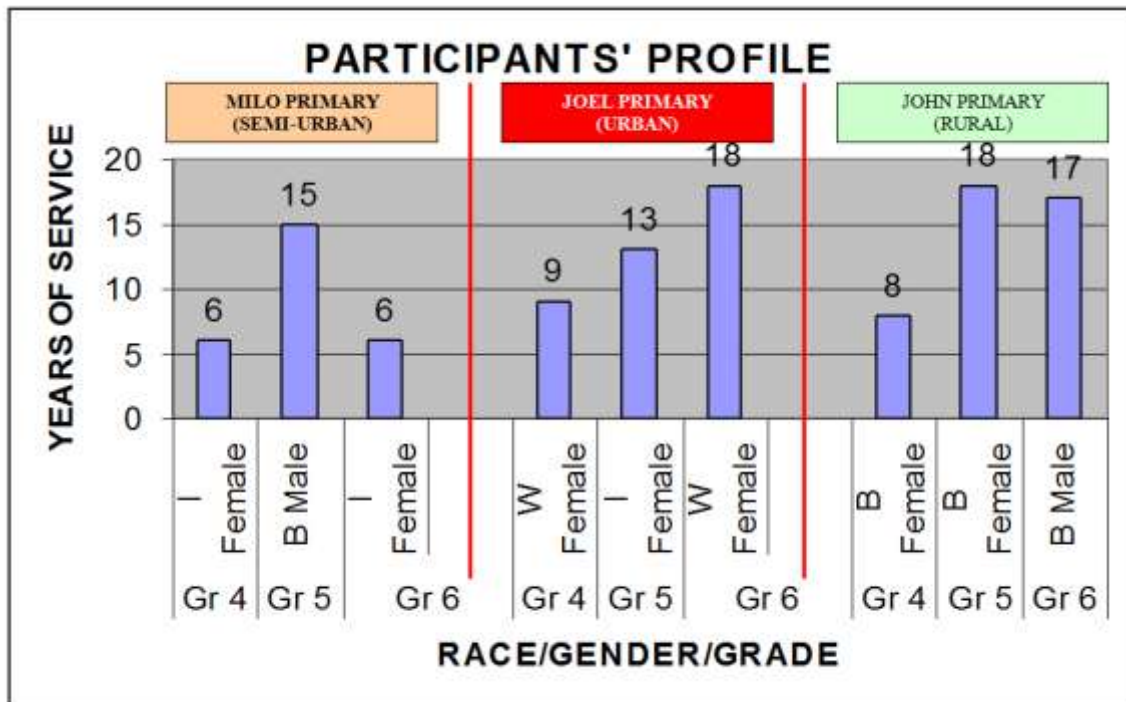


Figure 6.1 Profile of participants in interviews

Milo Primary was located in a semi-urban area, and had an Indian female Grade 4 teacher with six years of teaching experience, a black male Grade 5 teacher with fifteen years of teaching experience and an Indian female Grade 6 teacher with six years of teaching experience. The urban school was Joel Primary, which had a white female Grade 4 teacher with nine years of teaching experience; an Indian female Grade 5 teacher with thirteen years of teaching experience and a white female Grade 6 with eighteen years of experience. John Primary's location was in the rural area, and the staff consisted of a black male Grade 4 teacher who had eight years of experience in teaching, a black female Grade 5 teacher with eighteen years of teaching and a black male Grade 6 teacher with seventeen years of experience. It is encouraging to note

that four out of the nine teachers had between five to 10 years' experience, implying that they did have some idea about LAD.

Females predominated in the Intermediate phase, as well: according to the statistics only two out of the nine teachers were males. It is also evident that the white teachers were only in the urban school. Figure 6.1 illustrates triangulation of data, to check the authenticity and trustworthiness of responses from the participants, and to deepen our understanding of LAD. Therefore at each research site, semi-structured interviews were conducted with intermediate phase teachers, and document analysis and a survey was used to strengthen data from interviews. Document analysis in this case was in the profiles of the schools. The Education Management Information System document (EMIS) (see DoE statistics, 2010) was analysed in each school because it contained data and information about all learners, teachers and schools. The purpose of the document analysis was to validate the information the teachers had given the researcher during the interviews. Document analysis was used to generate qualitative data to complement the data from interviews and survey questionnaire.

From an in-depth exploration of answers to the research questions 1 - 3, The qualitative analysis is presented in the five themes (as shown in Table 6.1), as follows: the first theme is concerned with the implementation of government literacy policy at classroom level; the next, with learners' experience of LAD in the classroom, the third, with the reasons for teachers' experience of LAD at classroom level, the fourth, with the social factors impacting negatively on the practice of LAD and the last, with the effective implementation of LAD in relation to teacher training and support. Table 6.1 shows how sub-themes to the themes identified in the literature emerged in response to attempts to answer the research questions. Note that research question 1d. and 3. are grouped together in the table, as they both relate to teacher training, but from a different perspective (i.e. findings and recommendations).

Table 6.1 Themes and sub-themes as related to the research questions

RESEARCH QUESTIONS	THEMES	SUB-THEMES
1. In terms of the practice of literacy acquisition and development: a. How are government literacy policies implemented in practice (i.e. at classroom level)?	1. The implementation of Government literacy policy at classroom level	a. understanding the concept of literacy b. Language in Education Policy (LiEP) c. (LiEP's) implementation and classroom reality
b. How do learners experience LAD in the classroom?	2. Learners' experience in the classroom of LAD	a. reading competences b. effects of learners' attitude to LAD on performance c. influence of parents and mother tongue education (i.e. on literacy acquisition and development) d. learners' academic ability (i.e. in literacy acquisition and development)
c. How do teachers experience developing literacy competences in the classroom?	3. Teachers' experience of LAD at classroom level	a. inadequate literacy personnel b. workload of teachers c. overcrowded classes
2. What underlying social factors can be seen to impact on the practice of LAD?	4. Social factors impacting negatively on the practice of LAD	a. local social context b. security for literacy resources c. physical challenges d. the perceived role of the SGB in promoting LiEP e. the capacity of SGBs in promoting LiEP f. budgeting
1. d. What preparation (if any) did they [teachers] receive for developing literacy competencies? ² 3. What recommendations for teacher training and support are suggested by the answers to the above questions?	5. Effective implementation of LAD in relation to teacher training and support	a. teachers' personal literacy b. impact of teacher unions c. effects of poverty and HIV/AIDS d. inadequate teacher training

² Research question 1.d. has been grouped with 3. as both are concerned with the same theme.

6.2.1 The implementation of Government literacy policy at classroom level

In this section the data found to answer research question 1a., “How are government literacy policies implemented in practice (i.e. at classroom level)?” is analysed. The first theme is Government Literacy Policy at Classroom Level, with three sub-themes (see Figure 6.3): understanding the concept of literacy, the Language in Education Policy (LiEP), and LiEP’s implementation and classroom reality.

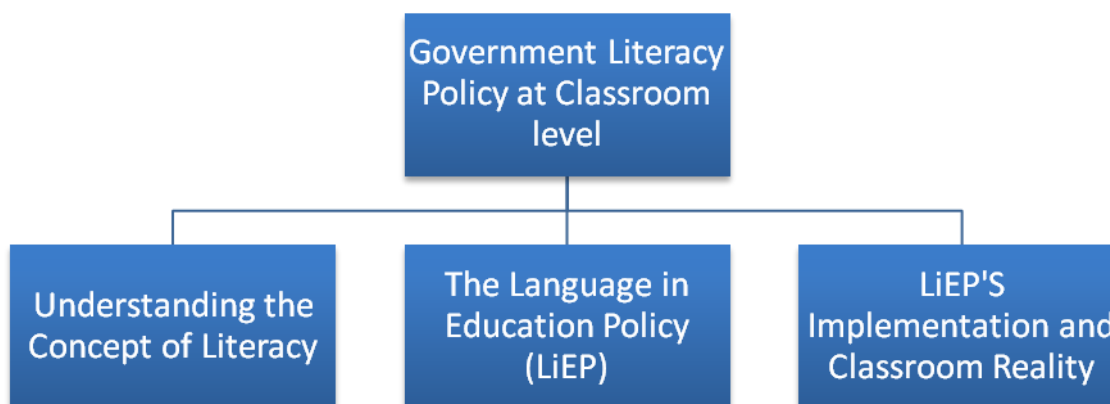


Figure 6.2 Government Literacy Policy at Classroom Level with three sub-themes

a. Understanding the concept of literacy

It was evident from the data that all nine participants had a clear understanding of the concept of literacy, that is, that learners should be able to read and write with confidence, fluency and understanding, and use their skills in speaking and listening to explore, articulate and extend their understanding of texts. This is clearly presently not the case in our schools. Commenting on the understanding of the concept of literacy, the teacher commented as follows:

John Primary Grade 5 teacher:

It can mean different things to different people for me literacy is having a life skill in reading and writing. (Interview, 3)

Joel Primary Grade 6 teacher:

Basically the issue with literacy deals with how learners perform in their reading and writing, it is not so much about scoring or attaining marks, it is about them know how to read and write.... (Interview, 9)

Milo Primary Grade 5 teacher:

... it's difficult to explain, I think it does not only relate to aspects in the classroom... literacy is definitely about how the learners can read and write properly to attain academic success. (Interview, 6)

The participants' understanding of literacy is similar to that which is found in the literature. Scholars define literacy as reading and writing that is rooted in conceptions of knowledge in a particular educational context with its meaning and practices (Street, 2001b). Pally (2000) suggests that literacy includes complex integration and co-ordination of many cognitive perceptions and it is also thought to involve analytical and critical thinking (Carson & Leki, 1993).

b. The Language in Education Policy (LiEP)

To explore the nature of classroom practice in relation to literacy acquisition and development, identification and analysing of the government policy that is the Language in Education Policy (LiEP) is next. This research is informed by understanding the challenges and policy of LiEP as dynamic and changing as it is interpreted and reinterpreted at different levels in the education system by different stakeholders in terms of particular contexts, existing ideas, values and practices (Czerniewicz, Murray, & Probyn, 2000). Findings show that the Intermediate Phase teachers found it difficult to understand LiEP, as shown in this extract:

Joel Primary Grade 6 teacher:

The Department has given us this huge file of policies so it's not only that we need to understand LiEP only. In order for me to understand LiEP I need to read it, this becomes impossible with all the other policies. LiEP is not an exception because all the other policies are also problematic and difficult to comprehend and there are too many of them, we need the assistance of a legal department to assist and unpack all of these policies. (Interview, 9)

It is evident from the findings that all three schools are experiencing problems when it comes to LiEP. One factor that is common among the three schools is that South Africa is a multi-lingual society that has some unique linguistic problems because of its policy of apartheid. It is fundamental that each school has its own Language in Education Policy (LiEP) which promotes their vision and mission. The National Education Policy Act (Act 27 of 1996) empowers the Minister of Education to determine a national policy for language in education. Subsequently the Language-in-Education Policy (LiEP) was adopted in 1996. The formation and implementation of LiEP policy should not be mistaken for a simple, hierarchical, linear process. Policy-makers need to evaluate and get feedback from its stakeholders in order to establish the needs of the interpreted policy.

Table 6.2 Schools and LiEP Policy

30%	Schools had a LiEP
10%	Did not know what LiEP was
60%	Did not have this Policy

Two of the three case study schools have their School's Language Policy, in contrast to one school. John Primary Grade 4, 5, and 6 teachers asserted: *"we do not have a literacy policy, we only use what the Department gives us"* (Interviews 1, 2, 3). Both Joel and Milo Primary staff stated that the Senior Management Team developed the school's LiEP policy and sent it to the staff to make additions; the School Governing Body was not involved in this process. This is supported further

from evidence gathered in the survey (see Table 6.2). This Table illustrates the knowledge of LiEP experienced at school level.

It is evident from this study that in very few schools have School Governing Bodies (SGBs) formulated a literacy policy “as in the case of countless schools in South Africa” (Hendricks, 2003). Additionally, these findings suggest that a gap exists between policy and implementation.

Joel Primary Grade 4 teacher:

Wow, there are too many policies, we do not read and know them all it is impossible. Many of these policies are complex therefore we teachers do not know what is required to do with LiEP, also another point is that the DoE provides no advice on how to achieve what is required. (Interview, 8)

Hence it is an assumption only that teachers possess the necessary skills to bring together the design elements of the curriculum and to implement learning experiences which cater for different learner needs coming from the different contexts. Implications of overall policies show that there is policy overload, and that policies are also demanding, inappropriate, punitive and prescriptive instead of developing and supporting teachers.

This study seeks to trace ways in which literacy acquisition interplays with contextual factors amongst other things, what constraints and what enables LiEP policy and practices in primary education. Additionally, it would provide the starting for schools to develop, implement and improve their literacy policy. A number of reasons have been put forward to account for schools’ failure to develop and implement the LiEP Policy:

- schools do not have the knowledge of the policy,
- schools do not clearly understand the extent of their powers and responsibility,

- lack of experience and expertise in schools developing and implementing their own policies; and
- schools do not know what support the Department of Education (DoE) will provide (ELTIC, 1997)

These are consistent with and support the researcher's findings in this study. Policy at national level is a response to particular political imperative and pedagogical perspectives; there may be a different set of imperative at school levels and different cultural contexts, which accounts for the range of responses and responses in this study. The problems created by Curriculum 2005 in South Africa have happened in other countries where teachers believe that policies intended to reform education were simply thrown at them (Taylor, 2010b).

d. LiEP'S implementation and classroom reality

It is evident from the findings that most of the Intermediate Phase teachers agreed that implementing LiEP was a huge challenge because there are no clear guidelines given by the Department of Education. The following comments bear this out:

Milo Primary Grade 5 teacher:

Generally speaking most of our policies are symbolic in nature and we are competing internationally very few of these policies work, only when they implemented properly and sadly many of our schools do not implement this policy.
(Interview, 6)

Milo Primary Grade 6 teacher:

There was an overload of inappropriate and constantly changing educational policies, therefore you must understand that implementing the LiEP can lead to better performance in our classrooms but frankly speaking this is not the case. The problem is that we have no idea how to implement the LiEP, it is very

confusing and complex it is not something that can be easily done, we need to be trained on how to implement this policy. (Interview, 5)

John Primary Grade 6 teacher:

Implementation of LiEP is a very sore issue because this policy is just given to us by the DoE and they expect us to implement it. The fact of the matter is we as teachers are not consulted with during the process of the drawing up of policies but yet we are expected to implement them. The manner in which these policies are given to us is not professional. We must play a vital role in this process. We have a good LiEP policy, but we are attaining poor literacy outcomes and for me that means something is wrong in our practice that is in our classroom we still have a long way to go, I don't understand anything about this policy, I do my job, I teach so yes implementing any policy is a big challenge for us. (Interview, 1)

Joel Primary Grade 5 teacher:

Implementing LiEP is problematic because we do not have clear guidelines on how to implement it. (Interview, 7)

Existing practices and realities in schools militate against implementing the policy says (Taylor & Vinejevoid, 1999). Another issue is monitoring the LiEP policy, as it was stated by the participants that nobody seemed to be monitoring it. In 1998 the Department of Education proposed an ambitious plan to monitor and implement the Language/Literacy LiEP policies (Department of Education, 1998). However, it appears that little has happened since then (Probyn *et al.*, 2002). It is arguable whether the resources (both financial and in terms of capacity) will ever be available to put this plan into practice.

This evidence is supported by Taylor (1997), who comments that implementation of policies can never be achieved in a vacuum. Since policies are part of a social environment, they can be expected to be ignored, resisted, contested or re-articulated to suit local circumstances. Teachers and parents are at the receiving

end of policymaking, and this causes frustration. The frustration that teachers experience is an indication of the fact that policy implementation is never straightforward. It is often - incorrectly - assumed by policy-makers that there is a link between policy production and policy implementation. The LiEP policy has been described as one of the most progressive in the world (Probyn *et al.*, 2002) but few schools have implemented it. The researcher's findings cannot be related to policy or literature because insufficient research is available on the implementation of Language policy (LiEP) in the Intermediate Phase.

Table 6.3 shows that a national department survey in literacy in 2003 revealed that fewer than 40% of all learners were literate in Grade 6. The results of testing again in Grade 6 in 2005 showed no significant improvements, nor do the result of this study in 2009. Disturbingly, this suggests that unless learners learn to read and write at the right moment in the Foundation Phase, they are unlikely to learn later on supported by our poor matric results see DoE 2011 report). The results of a PIRLS pilot study completed with a Grade 4 sample in 2005 already provided indicates that learners may be struggling to develop literacy experience and ability to acquire and use information in reading and writing.

Table 6.3 Progression in literacy to Grade 6

Grade	2003	Grade	2005	Grade	2009
4	35%	4	38%	4	45%
5	40%	5	40%	5	43%
6	38%	5	39%	6	46%

It is essential that the above literacy competencies are required to make the transition to reading to learn in the Intermediate Phase our in schools. This study is aimed at exploring how teachers are trained to develop learner literacy at the Foundation Phase which serves as the preparatory phase for reading to learn in

the Intermediate Phase, and at the Intermediate Phase itself, a phase in which literacy skills should be strengthened and consolidated (Mullis, Kennedy, Martin & Sainsbury, 2004).

According to the January 2011 newspapers, various articles were written about the glowing accounts of the allegedly improved pass rate. It would be interesting to find out whether literacy tests (e.g. PIRLS) confirm this improvement at the level of basic literacy. It was also mentioned that many students registered for matric but did not actually arrive to write the examinations.

6.2.2 Learners' experience of LAD in the classroom

Research question 1b. was: "How do learners experience LAD in the classroom?" This section presents participants' responses as to how the learners experienced LAD in the classroom in the Intermediate Phase. All nine Intermediate Phase teachers stated that there were many different factors which impacted on learners' performance of LAD in the classroom. These factors hindered the learners' from acquiring and developing the necessary LAD skills.

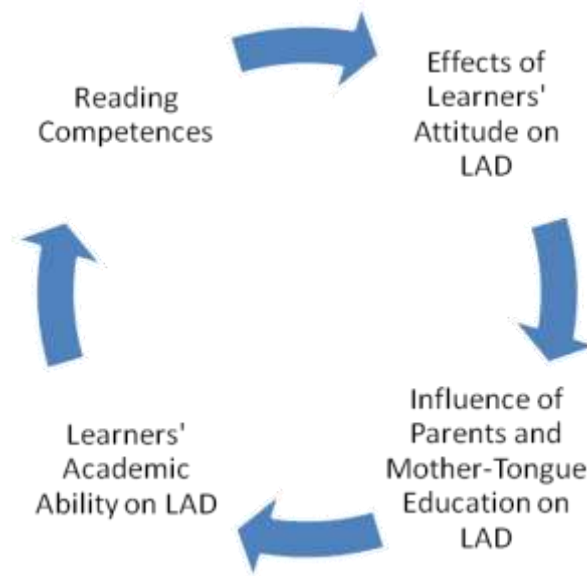


Figure 6.3 Factors impacting on learners' experience of LAD

Figure 6.3 illustrates the four factors, namely, reading competencies, effects of learners' attitude on LAD, influence of parents and mother-tongue education on LAD, and the effects of learners' academic ability on LAD. These four factors are discussed in detail below. While classroom practice is not the only factor involved in literacy acquisition and development as Ball & Kenny's (1990) study shows, it is quality classroom teaching which has the most influence on successful outcomes of the learner. It is generally acknowledged that primary education is the most crucial stage in the life of a learner because learning and developing literacy skills are essential for learners to continue to develop throughout their schooling. These factors are shown in Figure 6.3.

a. Reading competences

In declaring 2001 the "year of the reader" the Minister of education has acknowledged that there is an enormous problem with regard to reading. Inability to read for meaning is a factor in our high failure rates that costs the education system millions every year (READ, 1998).

All nine participants at the case study schools claimed that it is a difficult responsibility for any teacher to assist learners with reading because of the number of learners and lack of competence in reading, as the following excerpts show.

Joel Primary Grade 5 teacher:

Reading is fraught with many challenges and impacts negatively in the literacy acquisition and development process (see Table 6.5), also learners are confused with reading and writing in more languages, we have three languages. Our learners cannot read properly in English let alone the others. In our school these are the languages, Zulu, English and Afrikaans, now this is a major problem. These learners cannot cope with reading in three different languages in Grade 5 or any other Grade for that matter. (Interview, 7)

John Primary Grade 4 teacher:

Reading is a big problem especially with us rural schools in general. The first problem is that my school children come from backgrounds where they live with their grandparents. And you know that most black grandparents cannot read or write. Our children take advantage of this and they do not like to read. Their excuse is that the grandparents cannot help them. Despite this the other problem is that we do not have a library at schools and reading material is very difficult to get. But we assist weak and gifted readers during extra-curricular period with learners that do not do sports with whatever material we have and I also use a different approach to improve reading by putting up phrases and fliers around classrooms, this helps the learners. (Interview, 2)

These opinions are consistent with the finding of the Review Committee on Curriculum 2005, which stated that there were reading problems among learners because schools seemed to spend budget allocations on stationery rather than on learning support materials and reading books (Department of Education, 2000). The Review Committee analysis imply that the promotion of reading is an important responsibility for the literacy committee and they should be selective in purchasing relevant resources and ensuring that money is not spent unwisely and unnecessarily. School-wide campaigns to promote reading are necessary and effective reading programmes are critical for South African schools (Dubazana & Karlsson, 2006).

A more significant factor is the role of parent-child interaction in interpreting the meanings and words of written stories (Rose, 2003). Many African children are not exposed to this kind of orientation, which is crucial in preparing them to become independent readers and writers in school (see Figure 6.4). The majority of children in South Africa start school without the necessary pre-literacy skills. As a result, they have little concept of what reading means and have not developed the skills that make subsequent acquisition of literacy easier. Nagel (2010) states that is unrealistic to expect learners to be involved in reading, because homes are

without books, and reading is not a culture for many South African communities. These learners also have onerous domestic responsibilities and have no time to concentrate on reading or school work. Thus there are different approaches which teachers in the three case study schools make use of in order to assist learners to become lifelong readers.



Figure 6.4 Reading-prepared learners entering Grade 1 (in *The Times*, Wednesday 13 January 2010)

This implies that the teachers spend time with the learners every day. Assisting the learners every day is a mammoth task, and it may be impossible to carry out this responsibility in this particular way because of the load of the curriculum and time that is needed. It is evident that the three schools encourage learners to read a wide variety of cultural books.

Milo Primary Grade 6 teacher:

Cultural books are relevant to the social local contexts of learners' backgrounds and their cultures. We have learners from diverse cultures, languages and

religions. The diversity of the learners presents a challenge for the reading promotion activities. The challenge for us is that these learners do not share the same language, culture and religion and resources at our school are inadequate. (Interview, 57)

Generally, resources in South African schools are inadequate, (see *The physical challenge*). This is the case despite demonstrated intentions in the country's constitution to support a stronger culture of reading, for example, through literacy campaigns such as *Masifunde Sonke*, which is a Zulu phrase that means "let us all read." This campaign was launched in 2000 to develop a culture of reading in the country, but there is very little reading material available, especially for poor people who cannot afford to buy books and magazines for themselves. There is even a shortage of books written in English. Up to five children can be found sharing a book in a classroom. The situation is worse for reading materials written in indigenous languages. Therefore "bedtime story" does not exist in the African home vocabulary, especially in rural areas. This situation does not foster the habits of reading for pleasure and thus African children are at a disadvantage at school and do not become competent in reading textbooks designed to develop knowledge in different learning areas. The socioeconomic gap becomes even wider when richer children move on to computer-based learning, while poorer students continue not to have access even to ordinary books. Many African parents tell stories from the oral tradition to their children. Folktales are important because they link children with their culture and help them to build a strong identity. But the typical patterns of meaning of oral stories are quite different from those of written stories. The elaboration of characters, events, and settings, and the relation of illustrations and text are highly distinctive in written stories.

Findings reveal that the Intermediate Phase teachers are involved in developing learners' proficiency in reading. The participants at the three schools assert that reading is important to make life-long learners also life-long readers.

John Primary Grade 6 teacher:

Reading is a problem therefore we use our reading skills to provide and strengthen programmes to accommodate both gifted and weak learners by reading aloud and reading in groups. (Interview, 1)

Milo Primary Grade 4 teacher:

We use the DEAR programme which means “drop everything and read”. Initiating the DEAR programme motivates the learners to read at this school. At a particular time of the day the school bell is rung and learners leave whatever they are doing and read for fifteen minutes. Another initiative at this school is the buddy system whereby a Foundation Phase teacher is paired with an intermediate phase teacher to assist in promoting reading skills among teachers and learners. This buddy system involves the Foundation Phase teacher teaching the Intermediate Phase teacher reading skills. For learners to become critical thinkers and life-long readers, the Intermediate Phase Teachers are key to improving the reading abilities of learners as well as improving the general literacy skills. (Interview, 4)

It is encouraging to note that the Intermediate Phase teachers are strong, and have a dynamic influence on teaching of literacy skills as well as reading activities in school so as to produce lifelong readers. Thus, these teachers become a key component in improving the reading abilities of learners, as well as general literacy levels in their schools.

b. Effects of learners’ attitude to LAD on performance

The interviews revealed that, according to the Intermediate Phase teachers, a positive attitude on the part of the learner plays a major role in literacy acquisition and development.

Milo Primary Grade 4 teacher:

Our learners have a negative attitude, they do not want to learn, read or write, they just want to play, play, play but if learners have a positive attitude then they will

perform well in literacy. Having a negative attitude will impede learners from acquiring the literacy skills that they need to succeed at school. (Interview, 4)

John Primary Grade 4 teacher:

Today's learners do not want to know the importance of literacy, for them cell-phones are good, reading is bad, for them to cope academically this bad attitude must change. (Interview, 2)

John Primary Grade 6 teacher:

Learners have bad attitudes because they do not value literacy, sometimes their parents, most time their grandparent are illiterate, they do not read at home, for me this attitude change must start at home, there must be action if not the learners will not want to read or learn. If the parents and grandparents encourage them I am sure this negative attitude will change for all school work. (Interview, 1)

Joel Primary Grade 6 teacher:

You know today we have a different calibre of children. They can choose between possessing a bad or good attitude towards their academic progress in school. You also have those learners that work very hard although they are not clever but some of our learners are interested in reading; they have a positive attitude towards their work, while there are a few that are struggling with this attitude problem. The type of attitude learners possess contributes to the ability of the learner at classroom level. The attitude of learners flows into the ability of learners in acquiring literacy skills. (Interview, 9)

A positive attitude is another significant factor which assists learners to acquire and developing their literacy skills. The complexity of attitude of learners involved in literacy acquisition and development is borne out by the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS). In 2006 forty countries, including South Africa, participated in this study. One of the findings revealed that South Africa rated last in the category "learners' attitude towards reading". The PIRLS study also

established that a positive attitude towards reading is essential in meeting one of the requirements for literacy acquisition and development. Flowing from the learners' abilities is another challenge that deals with parents and mother-tongue education.

c. Influence of parents and mother tongue education

The Intermediate Phase teachers stated that isi-Zulu is another major factor that acts as a language barrier when it comes to literacy acquisition and development. Many of the black learners speak isi-Zulu at home and in school they are taught in English, hence these learners cannot cope adequately in English. This view was presented by Milo Primary Grade 5 teacher:

We must understand especially in a semi-urban place that some parents are not fully literate and find it difficult to support their children's learning at school. Other parents have low literacy levels and cannot relate to what's happening in the curriculum. Some parents specifically want their children to learn in English. That is why, once learners reach school, there are many factors which may inhibit their learning process and for those learning a second and third language, the challenges are even greater. An important factor is some parents demand for English-medium instruction. These parents are not well informed about the reasons why reading and writing are best taught in the learner's dominant home language.
(Interview, 6)

UNESCO defines mother tongue education as education that is the language which a learner has acquired in the early years and which normally has become their natural instrument of thought and communication (UNESCO, 1968). In South Africa, many learners learn and write in a second language which makes it more difficult to acquire and develop skills in the Foundation Phase or early stages of primary education, while the national language policy is sound, the practice is questionable (Anderson, 2005). It is clear that urgent interventions are required to gain the necessary academic and social skills which only can come through

literacy. Reading and writing are an extension of language and similarly, if a learner does not acquire basic literacy skills in the Foundation Phase, it is difficult to catch up later in life. The Education Department's revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS) of 2005 recognises that our knowledge and identity is shaped by language. However, learning how to read and write is different from the assimilation of language and most learners require some formal teaching before they become literate.

John Primary Grade 5 teacher:

In my school a big problem is that parents want English only, parents do not want their children to learn in the mother tongue, they prefer English because they believe that their children will do better in their career pathing, you cannot argue with parents, they tell you straight I send my child school to learn English not Zulu that we talk at home. (Interview, 3)

Joel Primary Grade 4 teacher:

Many black learners cannot cope with English, but their parents' choice is that they want their children to be efficient in English, and yes we're having many challenges because we have three language in our school that confuses our learners. (Interview, 8)

John Primary Grade 4 teacher:

You are aware that In South Africa a learner experiences mother tongue education for the first four years Grade R to Grade 3 i.e. Foundation Phase. The switch from mother tongue to English medium of instruction takes place from Grade 4 which is the Intermediate Phase. This switch is a problem because every school is not practicing it or implementing only some are. We in the rural area we have problems with English and what about the resources, we do not have for this switch. (Interview, 2)

This abrupt switch has resulted in our “literacy crisis” (Kamwangamalu, 2000b). This outcome has made mother-tongue education one of the thorniest issues in South African education, with some supporting and other opposing it. Those who support it maintain that there is effective literacy acquisition and development in learners. Those who oppose it maintain that research on the merits of mother-tongue education is inconclusive (Kamwangamalu, 2000a). The shift to English is happening in schools despite the fact that teachers and some parents know that this creates problems for learners (ELTIC, 1997; Mgudlwa, 1997) especially those in rural areas with little access to English (Nomvete, 1994). It is not surprising that this shift may be one of the problems for our literacy crisis. Isi-Zulu is the home language of most of the black learners. Some of their parents demand that their children are taught isi-Zulu while others want their children to learn English. This problem affects the teachers because there are inadequate funds to buy resources in both languages. However, at the case study schools findings show that teachers seek assistance from Educational Library Information Technology Services (ELITS) and Non-Governmental Organisation NGOS to provide sufficient resources.

Milo Primary Grade 6 teacher:

We know that it's happening in every school that the majority of Black parents and children won't accept a mother tongue as the medium of instruction. Some parents think that if their children are good in English, they will get good jobs, since English is the global language. Parents feel that if their children are not sufficiently competent in English, this will hinder their opportunities for their social climb. Parents are reluctant to accept schooling in the mother tongue because they know cases in which people have had unsuccessful job interviews because they couldn't express themselves well in English. You know that in South Africa job interviews are not conducted in indigenous languages. (Interview, 5)

These views are supported by many authors that have documented the resistance of mother tongue instruction because of its close association with the apartheid

ideology (de Wet, 2000; Vermeulen, 2000; Van Rensburg & Weideman, 2002). Furthermore, results of the EMIS survey conducted by the DoE indicated that 53% of the learners do not regard the mother tongue as their home language, 93% of the learners chose English as their preferred language of teaching and learning. This also suggests that both parents and learners have similar resistance to mother tongue instruction. Furthermore, another problem is that South African schools do not have the necessary resources, in terms of personnel and learning material, to support the ideal mother tongue instruction in all learning areas (Moyo 2002).

There is growing support internationally for use of the mother tongue to teach literacy. Some people believe that to teach basic literacy in a language other than the mother tongue is a recipe for “pedagogic disaster” (Carson & Leki, 1993; Lauglo, 2001) suggests that the most effective way to build learners’ literacy skills is to begin by teaching them to read and write in their home language. She concurs with research findings that demonstrate that learners who acquire literacy in their first language and transition gradually to the national language perform better and faster academically than those learners who study only in a national language.

This study suggests that it is necessary that Intermediate Phase teachers take into consideration the local linguistic context when purchasing and selecting resources because language has a major impact on learners’ achievements in school. According to Green (2008) there are gaps in literature with regards to the acquisition of literacy and teaching and support, notably how policy impacts on the actual classroom practice in the case of the switch from indigenous mother tongue instruction to English in grade 4. In the latter case, a conflict between parental wishes and government policy can add complications to the actual teaching situation, moreover, complications which even experienced and well resourced teachers cannot resolve. For example, it is evident from this findings that parents wish for “model C” type of instruction in English from Grade R, while government policy call for instruction in the indigenous mother tongue. Hence, some schools

have changed their policies by introducing English in Grade 4, a year earlier to align it with the change from Foundation to intermediate Phase in C2005, and some as early as Grade 1 (National Centre for Curriculum Research and Development (NCCRD), 2000; Taylor & Vinejevold, 1999).

d. Effects of earners' academic ability on LAD

It is evident that another factor that contributes positively to acquiring and developing literacy is the academic ability of the learners. This study shows that there are many gaps with learners when it comes to cognition about literacy learning and not just what they should learn. The nine participants revealed that there are three different levels of learners: (1) the gifted learners who have a very strong ability to comprehend and acquire literacy quickly, (2) the average learner and (3) the weak learners. Having these different levels of learners is problematic because the teacher's workload increases to prepare lessons according to the different levels, and there is not enough time to address learners' needs at all of these levels. However, teachers are trying to cope as best as they can. A John Primary Grade 6 teacher commented:

Rural learners have a low academic ability because there are factors which contribute to this and one is especially staying in the rural area, where there are no resources e.g. reading material to help our learners, I think that is why our learners in Grade 4 - 6 can hardly read and write, they are having many problems but learners can express themselves orally but this does not help them. It is very easy for learners to talk but very difficult for them to write down what they feel. For learners from literate family backgrounds prepares and reinforces the experience of parent-child reading, contributing to their development as independent readers. The problem is the gap with learners that do not read before coming to school. This gap results from our failure to train teachers in techniques to teach these learners to recognize words they are reading. Shared reading is an activity where the teacher reads a children's book to learners repeatedly over 2-3 weeks,

explaining it and engaging them until they understand it and can say almost every word in the story. (Interview, 1)

This activity is modelled on parent-child reading practices. The different levels of learner abilities should be addressed in the Foundation Phase if not these learners go into the Intermediate Phase were the gap broadens.

Milo Primary Grade 4 teacher:

We have poor quality of learners, their literacy levels have definitely declined because they are not prepared to learn, they are just lazy. (Interview,4)

Joel Primary Grade 4 teacher:

Parents send their children to our school knowing that they will be taught to excel academically and they are assured of this, most of our learners are very good, they focus on their work and produce good results, we do have weak ones but they work very hard and they try to do well in their tests and assignment despite their weak levels, working hard is a key to improving academically in class. (Interview, 8)

Another challenge is the language ability of the learners as asserted by a Joel Primary Grade 5 teacher:

It is compounded because we teach three languages, i.e. English, Afrikaans and isiZulu. It confuses the learners; they are at different level in comprehending these languages. (Interview, 7)

This view is supported in that learners should be taught in languages which they understand and through which they can learn; teaching practices should be based on the belief that all learners can learn (Nomvete, 1994). According to Soudien (2008) understanding the process of cognition remains at the heart of education (i.e. the process of teaching and learning). Learners' needs are constantly evolving and developing our understanding of how learning and cognition happens, and

teachers need to be prepared for this (Lockett, 1995). They need to develop new approaches to teaching, otherwise learners will continue to perform poorly as is in our present situation. All nine participants experienced great concern because learners were performing badly and for them it is difficult to promote LiEP with no clear guidelines.

A key finding of the evaluation in the South African PIRLS (2006) is that the national indicator for the availability of resources at home is about 31%. The study shows that 56.1% of households in the survey had access to television sets, 46.9% had access to a telephone, 23% had access to newspapers and magazine, 53% had fewer than ten books, and 66.2% had access to a radio. This picture is not yet ideal for our households. Learners who have acquired skills are “able” and learners who did not acquire skills are “unable”: the gap is not simply evaluation or formal assessment, but continuously relentless in the form of ordinary classroom interaction where teachers serve to differentiate learners on their abilities to respond successfully. The central problem is of learners’ differing capacities to engage in and benefit from literacy acquisition and development practices in the classroom. This problem can be overcome if teachers squarely focus on teaching all learners in the intermediate class to read and write the texts expected at their level and area of study, as part of everyday teaching practice (David, 2006). This is not the case in South African schools in primary education today as the curriculum timetable does not cater for this. Learners experience inequality in levels of abilities from the first day they walk into the classroom. They are ill-prepared to manage literacy let alone progress by their training.

To sum up the findings about the performance of learners in the classroom and how they contribute to the process of teaching and learning, the Intermediate phase teachers stated that the following factors relate to learners’ performance: reading competences, effects of learners’ attitude on (LAD), influence of parents and mother-tongue education on LAD, and learners’ academic ability on LAD. But there are sometimes gaps between what is claimed and what is done. This is

because there are obstacles such as resource constraints and ignorance about the LiEP that prevents the teachers and learners from performing as they should. The significance of these factors contributes negatively to the learners' performance. Some black parents have adopted an attitude that mother-tongue education is not important in terms of economic viability, hence English serves as a lingua franca (Kamwangamalu, 2000b): it is a language of the elite and the poor.

6.2.3 Teachers' experience of LAD in the classroom

This section deals with research question 1c: How do teachers experience developing literacy competences in the classroom? Three sub-themes are discussed: inadequate literacy personnel, workload of teachers and overcrowded classes. Figure 6.5 illustrates the sub-themes flowing from the main theme.

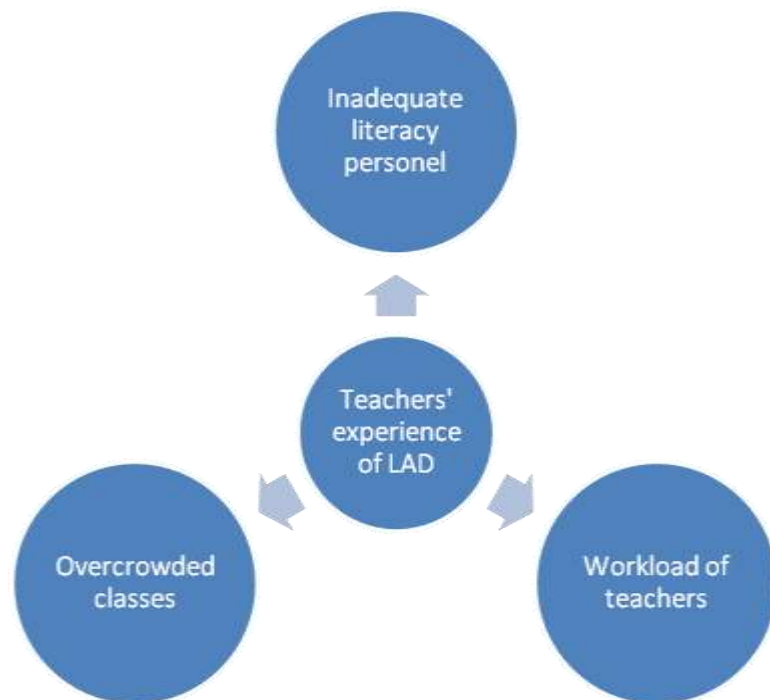


Figure 6.5 Some of the challenges experienced by teachers in LAD

Intermediate Phase Teachers in the case study schools expressed concern about their classroom practices especially in literacy, given the fact the South African learners are performing poorly in literacy and numeracy. A John Primary Grade 5 teacher said:

Really speaking there are numerous changes taking place such as in our country the politics, our context, our curriculum, the nature of our learners, more importantly our education, we are not prepared to teach in our multilingual and multicultural classroom environment and a big yes, we really do not understand our learners because of their different contexts, by not prepared I mean we do not have the relevant training, this makes our teaching task very problematic...
(Interview, 3)

This view was expressed by a Joel Grade 6 teacher:

Teachers need skills, I am talking about relevant and proper skills so that that we can contribute to classroom curriculum and pedagogies that must be grounded in the complexity of our society, it is essential that we have literacy skills to cope in our classroom. (Interview, 3)

The above challenges which are revealed by the case study teachers are confirmed by Soudien (2008 p1): “our country is in a desperate state of literacy”. This poses a question about the implications for teachers in the classroom.

a. Inadequate literacy personnel

The three case study schools expressed that there was a challenge when it came to literacy teachers. This view was expressed by a Milo Grade 5 teacher:

Insufficient personnel is a challenge because teachers' workload become bigger, that is way insufficient personnel contribute negatively to how the teachers perform their functions in the teaching and learning process of literacy acquisition and development. This is the Department's wrong doing this inadequate provision of

human resources is the prime negative factor contributing to the performance in the classroom (Interview, 6).

Milo Primary Grade 4 teacher:

There are a few teachers in our school and big classes it is now time that something is done about this, It is a big problem and you know that the government must address past disparities and the allocation or redeployment of qualified teacher literacy teachers to school to bring a balance in schools, just look at the ex-model c schools they have many literacy teachers but the government is not worried about our schools. (Interview, 4)

Joel Primary Grade 5 teacher:

I am not a qualified literacy teacher, let me explain, I am a qualified teacher but not literacy. There is a problem in South Africa with regards to literacy. We do not have many qualified literacy teachers and this contributes negatively in the classroom. If the Department of Education provides more literacy teachers we will have positive results with our learners. (Interview, 7)

b. Workload of teachers

This section discusses the heavy workload of teachers that impacts negatively on literacy acquisition and development. The nine participants\ expressed a concern that their workload was enormously high and therefore they could not concentrate on teaching effectively.

Joel Primary Grade 5 teacher:

You may think we are better off in this ex-white school because somehow the perception is that we have a lower workload than other school, now that perception is not true because we teach the same curriculum and the same if not more work need to be done. We do like the other school experience similar problems. For example I am expected to collect school fee and for me this should be collected by the clerk and not me. ... there is also huge amounts of paper work that must be

done in IQMS, record keeping etc these are all administration work that I must perform ... we have huge workloads because of all the administrative tasks we have to perform, in essence a clerk should be doing that not teacher. I feel overwhelmed by these never-ending external demands on my curriculum time because these administrative tasks distract me from my actual teaching. (Interview, 7)

A similar sentiment concerning teacher workload is echoed by a Milo Primary Grade 6 teacher:

Teachers have numerous complaints and one of those is the huge workload we carry. Let me express this like this we are overworked, underpaid, over-stressed and under-resourced, problems in understanding the curriculum. The teaching conditions are pathetic and the stress is just unbearable. There is no training to implement this new curriculum and this build up the stress further more and many teachers just stay away from school because school is stressful and exasperating. (Interview, 5)

This view is supported by Jansen (2003): there appear to be continuing problems based around the curriculum. There is still suspicion about OBE. There remain, in some provinces, very articulate expressions by school managers and teachers about the failure of curriculum implementation to address the basic competences of literacy and numeracy in schools.

John Primary Grade 5 teacher:

... amongst other problems in the rural schools we are poorly resourced, we have large classes which increases our workload because of inadequate administrative support in schools. This administration takes our classroom time away. In my school we do not have a clerk so teachers must perform all the administrative duties and over and above that we still must teach making our lives very chaotic and frustrating. (Interview, 3)

John Primary Grade 6 teacher:

I have already mentioned that we do not have a library and we have few resources and this increases our workload because we need to photocopy them for learners, really we work under difficult conditions, also we are under-resourced and no admin support service, and poor school community environment limiting us to teach... (Interview, 1)

This supports the concept that effective professional teacher development begins with an understanding of teachers' needs and work. Teachers need a wide variety of ongoing opportunity to upgrade their skills (Arends & Phurutse, 2009). The amount of paperwork and administration required of teachers by the (NCS) is highlighted by the Education Labour Relations Council's (ELRC) study of teachers' workloads in Chisholm *et al.* (2005). Poor salaries and incentives do not attract and keep the best teachers in the system, following "worrying anecdotal reports that educators seemed to be leaving the profession in large numbers, and the reasons suspected is low morale, job dissatisfaction, poor salaries, AIDS and poor mortality" (Kruss, 2008).

Milo Primary Grade 5 teacher:

Generally speaking the teaching profession has changed for the worst; Teachers are expected to do a huge amount of work for poor salaries. For me teaching is no more positive, rewarding work it's a nightmare, nobody understands our work or needs, we must improve our skills, our morale is very low, we are frustrated with additional administrative tasks. We are expected to fundraise and do the clerks work and at the same time teach our learners Apart from the poor salaries we earn we must put up with badly behaved learners and you know this multi-cultural schools are really frustrating teachers... (Interview,6)

Teachers spend much less time teaching and more time on other activities that is required by policy. In many schools instructional times has really eroded. Motshekga (2009) states that the curriculum places too heavy an administrative

burden on teachers. This undermines the teachers' primary task of teaching, which results in learners not acquiring the required skills they need. Increased workloads are caused, amongst other things, by large classes, lack of administrative support in schools. These factors cause an increased demand when it comes to administrative work (Motshekga, 2009). Furthermore, teachers are expected to fundraise and to do clerical work at the same time as teaching.

A contributing factor to heavy workloads is the wide spectrum of administrative activities that teacher must engage in. Evidence gleaned from this study reveals that teachers have heavy workloads in administration that impact negatively on curriculum time. Other challenges are the low morale of teachers and inadequate salaries. Low teacher morale and frustration with additional administrative demands must be addressed.

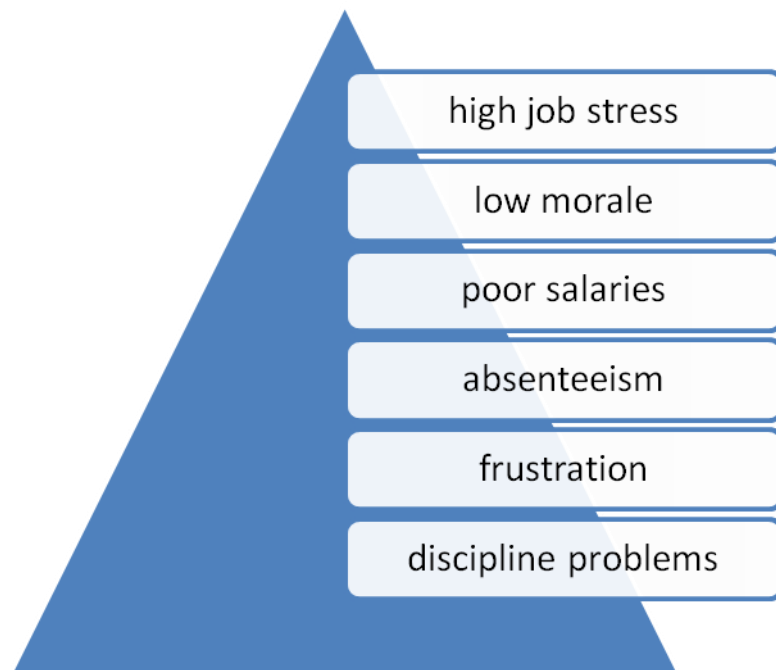


Figure 6.6 Negative challenges and social factors and impacting on LAD

To sum up the views shared by the teachers Figure 6.6 demonstrates some of their concerns. A 2008 case study conducted in sixteen schools across the four provinces: namely; Gauteng, KZN, Free State and North West asserts that teachers are dissatisfied with their workloads, working conditions, inadequate salaries and incentives as well as large classes (Diko & Akoojee, 2009) and teaching conditions in terms of working hours, workload, lack of learner discipline, respect, and high job stress (Chisholm *et al.*, 2005).

Similar views are articulated by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) showed that education was in serious trouble, because the study found out that there was a problem with the quality of education offered (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), 2008). These problems were identified in a number of areas such as inadequate financing, imbalanced curricula policy, poor teacher education and very unsatisfactory provision of teaching materials, poor teacher training, support and development. Furthermore, the Department of Education revealed that an average score for literacy of grade three pupils was 36% but the roadmap indicates that 15% of learners passed numeracy and literacy tests. Teachers' baseline tests in 2004 showed that the majority of teachers scored less than 50% on literacy. Additionally, there are severe shortages of teachers and that teachers in township schools spent only 3.5 hours a day teaching. The rest of the time was spent filling in forms, dealing with absenteeism, on organisation or handling discipline problems. South Africa's current education system is not adequately preparing learners in literacy acquisition and development. This is based on a range of indicators, including the international tests that have been done and we came last out of 45 countries.

c. Overcrowded classes

The participants' response was that a severe learning and teaching challenge in literacy acquisition and development is an overcrowded classroom and this is

despite government support, the schooling constituency remains under pressure. The learner to educator ratio (LER) for example is still a concern.

Joel Primary Grade 4 teacher:

In this school there are no big classes per say, the highest number of learners is 32 per class. I know the rural schools have a problem when it comes to big classes not in my school though. It is important that we have small classes this will ensure low pupil and teacher ratios, also this will create jobs for other teachers. I think that some schools' learner-enrolments are high therefore pupil: teacher ratios are not balanced. (Interview, 8)

John Primary Grade 4 teacher:

Most of the rural schools have a history and to present they still have big classes. In our school we put up to 80 learners in one class because there is no floor space or adequate classroom. Learners have to share desks and it is a problem to teach in that condition, our classes are overcrowded; it is really difficult to handle the different learners, and definitely learner achievements drop because teachers cannot cope with large classes and different abilities of learners. (Interview, 2)

The LER in public schools is 32.6 to 1 (Education Training and Development Practices - Sector Education and Training Authority, 2010). According to Ndlovu (2010) 600 matric learners are crammed in a classroom that is designed to hold 170 learners. Shortage of classrooms and overcrowding are also issues that traumatize children, teachers, and parents in South Africa. In rural areas there are classes as huge as 90 learners with only one teacher, a situation inconceivable in developed countries. Again, there are a lot of rural schools that have classrooms but have been vandalized (Lauglo, 2001). The challenge occurs when "three learners have to share a two-seater desk" (Ndlovu, 2010).

John Primary Grade 4 teacher:

Our classes are not balanced because one teachers, teachers 40 learners is problematic you know. We have these big ratios because we have a shortage of classrooms. (Interview, 2)

The average Grade 4 class size included in the South African PIRLS 2006 study was 46 learners, the highest of the participating countries and higher than the international average class size of 24 learners, also supported by Serrao (2010) that 25% of schools have more than 45 learners per class. The physical challenge is discussed below. Shortage of classrooms and overcrowding are also issues that traumatize children, teachers, and parents in South Africa. In rural areas there are classes as huge as 90 learners with only one teacher, a situation inconceivable in developed countries.

6.2.4 Social factors impacting negatively on the practice of LAD

This relates to research question 2, “What underlying social factors can be seen to impact on the practice of LAD?” Figure 6.7 illustrates the social factors impacting negatively on LAD; Local social context, security for literacy resources, physical challenges, the perceived role of the SGB in promoting LiEP, the capacity of the SGB in promoting LiEP and budgeting.

a. Local social context

Findings reveal that the local social context is an important factor that might hamper the Intermediate Teachers’ work. Social context refers to the conditions and characteristics such as culture, language and economic levels of people in the community surrounding the local schools. For example, teachers’ work might be impeded or slowed down because they need to cater for the different languages of the learners at the school.



Figure 6.7 Social factors impacting negatively on LAD

Milo Primary Grade 5 teacher:

Geographically we are situated in a semi-urban area close to the location. Our learners reside in this place meaning they come from basically poor backgrounds. These learners are faced with overwhelming family problems and social difficulties. Taking care of families is an adult responsibility, hence these learners have bad behavioural problems, and also there are many child headed families in our school. Learners cannot concentrate on their education but to take care of all these other things first... They stay away from school to provide and care for their siblings... (Interview, 6)

Joel Primary Grade 6 teacher:

We have a mixture of learners firstly, black, coloured, Indian learners some come from wealthy families but all of them still have difficulty learning three languages. (Interview, 9)

John Primary Grade 5 teacher:

... they live in the informal shack dwelling homes this has a ripple effect on learners because of where they live. The books get wet when rain comes through leaking roofs and often damages the books. The deterioration of the books further depletes the classroom resources and these often cannot be replaced because of financial constraints at the school level.... learners do not have bags to protect and carry their books. They carry their books in plastic bags and often the books are damaged, dirty and untidy but the problem is they cannot afford bags. (Interview, 3)

In the case study schools the following languages are spoken: isi-Zulu, Afrikaans, Arabic, Tamil, Hindi and English. Inadequate resources and having a low budget hinder the teachers from meeting the needs of the learners. Books cannot be bought in different languages because of the lack of finance. Most of the learners at the Milo and John Primary schools come from poor homes. Another local factor is the environmental and home conditions over which learners have no control.

b. Security for literacy resources

Two views are expressed by the participants about how security is a challenge in performing their role function in relation to literacy acquisition and development. The first view, that security is not a challenge, is shown by this Joel Primary teacher's response: *Good security measures exist. They also have strong gates, a guard twenty four hours, an alarm system and there is no theft. (Interview, 8)*

By contrast, Milo and John Primary school had problems with security:

John Primary Grade 5 teacher:

We do not have a library as you already know so the few resources and equipment is stored in different classroom where it is not secured. The vandals and thieves often come and break-into these classrooms and most time vandalised the classes because they cannot find anything of value. There is simply nothing like burglar guards or anything to protect the classroom, we have no guard or gate. The school

is also in a bad shape example there are many broken windows and ceilings are collapsing etc... (Interview, 3)

Milo Primary Grade 4 teacher:

...our security is insufficient, there's no alarm and previously our audio visual equipment and photocopier were stolen. We experience high rate of burglaries at our school'. In the case study schools one school has adequate security and on the other hand two schools have insufficient security. This insufficient security leads to problems such as burglaries. (Interview, 4)

It is vital that schools have a good security system because of South Africa's high crime rate (Donaldson, 2007). In most cases libraries store audiovisual equipment such as televisions and video machines, and this invites burglars to break into schools, as in the case of one of the schools. Resources need to be protected because equipment and books are expensive and cannot be replaced readily. Reports shows that safety and security in many of our schools still needs attention (Kruss, 2008). In the light of this finding and recent media reports, we face the challenge of making our school safer. It is true that our schools are among the most unsafe in the world. Lack of safety and security has a negative effect on the teaching and learning process. The provincial policy (Department of Education Library & Information, 2003) states that the literacy committees should ensure that the library has installed an electronic system to prevent items being removed from the library before being checked out on the circulation and borrowing system. This precaution is laughable when schools are being broken into and vandalised on a regular basis.

c. Physical challenges

Participants claim that two out of the three schools in the case study have a physical challenge in term of not having adequate infrastructure. By physical challenge, the researcher refers to a school that does not have a library or room or even enough space in a building to keep the collection of school resources. A

physical challenge may be a building that is small or “nonexistent”. Currently according to Serrao (2010) 93% of South African schools do not have libraries (see Figure 6.8).



Figure 6.8 Learners from a deep rural South African school

This is a view expressed by a John Primary Grade 6 teacher:

You know because of the legacy of apartheid we are still experiencing problems in the rural school, even though there is democracy. You are aware that we do not have a library, not having this library means that we also lack the learning materials and resources which creates a negative environment for teachers. Also we receive our textbooks very late in the year and most times it is insufficient. The little resources we now have are old and not appropriate for teaching because of curriculum change. But in my class I have a box in the back with resources I collected for my learners' use. (Interview, 1)

Ideally the library should be a whole school resource, centrally located within the school and accessible to all learner and educators needs (Department of Education Library & Information, 2003). International and local research suggests that resources play a vital role in primary education. However, in South Africa many schools lack resources, as confirmed by Asmal (2003): "How can outcomes-based education be implemented without libraries in our schools?" In order for the poor to derive maximum benefits from outcomes-based education, we have to provide at least minimum library resources in our schools. This will allow all our students to develop the important skills of investigating, processing, and analysing information. Furthermore, high-achieving schools view the school's library as pivotal to their success, and as going hand in hand with academic excellence. Moreover, the review committee highlights research that shows that C2005 depends on the provision of resources (Czerniewicz, Murray & Probyn, 2000).

The same view is expressed by Milo Primary Grade 4 teacher:

Our school does not have a library room, and you know that our physical challenge is in terms of a structure to house the resources. We do not have a library, we use two small storerooms and only the educator can go in and get the books because of inadequate space. It takes a longer period of time to issue books and only forty learners only at a time. This is a major challenge for me... (Interview, 4)

At two schools in the case study the teachers experience difficulties when it comes to physical challenges with space and which hindered them from performing effectively. Inadequate space hinders the learners from having the same choice at the resources, because they have to go into the library in small groups at different intervals. A limited space allows the first group of learners to choose the best resources and sometimes some learners do not get relevant resources. Limited space is then a factor in hindering learners from using the resources.

As much as 57% of Grade 4 teachers reported using textbooks every day or almost every day. Only 12% of Grade 4 learners had teachers who reported using

a variety of children's books for reading instruction every day or almost every day (Howie et al., 2007). Many of our schools undoubtedly are resource-strapped, and under-provisioned with textbooks, teaching and learning materials, and basic infrastructure (Department of Education, 2007).

Joel Primary Grade 6 teacher:

We teachers and learners at this school are fortunate that our school is very well resourced and equipped for the purpose of education. It can cater for all the different cultures of both teachers and learners needs. The range of reading materials, technology is quite contemporary and relevant. (Interview, 9)

This problem is noted by Hart (2004) who asserts that previously it was mostly Model C schools which had well established libraries. In many Black and some Indian schools the resources were scattered, locked up or stored away because the library was converted into a classroom. At some schools where there are no libraries, they may have a classroom collection or a box library. The literature reveals little information about this physical challenge: the focus is on teaching reading or encouraging reading as an activity and not the logistics of accessing reading materials.

d. The perceived role of the School Governing Bodies (SGBs) in promoting LiEP

The findings reveal that it is a general perception that all the SGBs are playing a vital role in LiEP's promotion.

Joel Primary Grade 6 teacher:

The issue with the SGB is a critical issue. Mainly speaking it is not the same as it is in the policy. Policy, practice and implementation of our policies are very much so symbolic in nature. And this is one of those policies. This is also problematic because they have been given powers but they do not know what to do with. (Interview, 9)

Milo Primary Grade 6 teacher:

SASA articulates the policy about the role and responsibilities of the SGB and parental involvement. This policy requires SGBs to announce the school LiEP and state how they will promote multilingualism through a variety of measures. It is imperative that all the stakeholders, parents, SGB, educators have a partnership with the concerns of education but this does not exist with our SGB, they show very little if not no involvement at all in LiEP. (Interview, 5)

John Primary Grade 4 teacher:

This policy is absent in our school as I have not seen it. How can our illiterate SGB know anything about the importance of promoting something they have not seen... (Interview, 2)

Findings reveal that the SGBs show little or no interest and no involvement in promoting LiEP because they do not understand the LiEP, and lack experience and knowledge in this area. SGBs do not have the time to attend to schools' needs such as promoting LiEP. From the findings it is evident the SGB were not involved with LiEP Policy at school level. This view is also supported by an accumulation of a small scale qualitative research studies (Brown, 1998; Taylor & Vinejevold, 1999). Literacy acquisition and development allows for the development of an accountable and democratically governed school system based on partnership between government, schools and local communities (Harber, 2000). Structures such as SGBs provide for public accountability and a way for parents and the community to influence schools (Pierre, 2000, p.145). However, it appears that the SGBs are not well equipped to make decisions about LiEP.

e. The capacity of SGBs in promoting LiEP

The two of the schools in the case study, the findings revealed that their SGBs lacked knowledge and skills when it came to promoting LiEP. A Milo Primary Grade 4 teacher asserted:

As a teacher I find LiEP complicated and complex. My reasoning is that the SGB does not know their role in connection with LiEP. If there is a policy it does mean to say the SGB knows what to do. They are not contributing because they do not know what to do they need to be capacitated on their functions overall not only with LiEP. (Interview, 6)

John Primary Grade 6 teacher:

The SGB must be trained when it comes to their functioning at school level. Most of them are there just for the power and do not know how to assist us at school. In the rural area the SGB is lacking training... our SGB has no clue to any policy let alone support and be involved in LiEP. (Interview, 1)

Joel Primary Grade 4 teacher:

This policy is absent in our school as I have not seen it. How can our illiterate SGB know anything about the importance of promoting something they have not seen... (Interview, 2)

Both Milo and John Primary school staff expressed their concerns about the knowledge and skills their SGBs had displayed. They also recommended that their SGBs need urgently to be capacitated not only on LiEP policy but overall on their roles and responsibilities at school level. SGBs, teachers and learners appear not to be coping with literacy acquisition and development because they are too complex. The underlying reasons for the above state of affairs appear to be a mismatch between government policy and implementation. In particular, policies are often rendered meaningless or confused because of the incapacity of SGBs to interpret policies so that they can be implemented at classroom level (Webb, 2002). Certain SGBs also appear unwilling to go along with government policies because they do not understand them (Skinner, 2003). The MEC of Education, Senzo Mchunu, states: "We also encourage the training of the SGB to better understand their roles and functions which will allow them to function maximally"

(Mbanjwa, 2009). Probyn (2002) states: “the SGBs are not well equipped to make decisions about LiEP and Literacy Policy”. The power and responsibility for putting the policy into practice has been devolved to the SGB. The South African Schools Act (1996) requires the SGB to announce the school’s policy and to state how it will promote multilingualism through a variety of measures, but in practice this is not being implemented.

f. Budgeting

According to the findings in this study the Intermediate Phase teachers asserted that the SGBs do not understand their role when it comes to budgeting for the literacy/library resources according to their status in the South African School’s Act (SASA). A John Primary Grade 4 Teacher commented:

There are many aspects of the policies that some of the SGBs do not understand and are knowledgeable about. One important one is that they need to be explained exactly what their job/role function at school level is as expressed in the SASA. In my school the principal oversees the budget but he is accountable to the School Governing Body. To make a general statement, you know when the SGB is not knowledgeable about polices then the principals take advantage of this hence we hear of misappropriation of funds... another problem is the budget we receive from DoE is very small and there is difficulty in securing resources with it. (Interview, 2)

The view expressed by the provincial policy on school libraries (KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education, 2003) is that the School Governing Body and school management teams should ensure that the library is budgeted for under the norms and standards for allocation of finances. Thus the School Governing Body should allocate finances to literacy teachers. This means that the literacy committee is integral to the educational process, because schools should budget for adequate and sustained funds for the development of resources (KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education, 2003). The South African Schools Act brought democratic

management to school level by granting power to administer school budgets to the School Governing Body. This move to site-based management is not good for the literacy committee because unless there is “unambiguous policy and direction from central government, schools are not choosing to spend their limited resources on libraries” (Busha & Harter, 1980, p.4). The School Governing Body does not understand the importance of their role. This means that the budgeting responsibility becomes a problem for the Intermediate Phase teachers.

Another view was expressed by a Milo Primary Grade 6 teacher:

... for the past three years we have been fund-raising in order to purchase literacy resources for the learners. If we do not provide adequate resources then we experience many challenges in the class with learners; sharing resources and cannot complete their work on time. The budget allocation is minimal and inadequate, we are always told there is no budget for the literacy because there are other important things to do, the teachers do fund-raising and the governing body is not involved in this process because they don't have the time, we raise funds. (Interview, 5)

A similar view is expressed that School Governing Bodies perceives that their main responsibility is raising funds for schools. In contrast to this, my findings are that the School Governing Body is not actively involved in this respect. Karlsson (2002) proposes that the embedded apartheid legacy of inequality at schools influences the governing body's capacity to raise funds. Funding may come from school fees, the norms and Standards allocation or fund-raising activities (KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education, 2003).

Joel Primary Grade 5 teacher:

... I am not sure who handles our budget. I also do not think that our SGB has anything to do with the finances at our school. But I do know we do not have any budgetary concerns because we have a few SGB teachers. In order for us to maintain these SGB teachers we need good financial backup. (Interview, 7)

One of the contentious issue arising from this is insufficient state funding for school literacy resources. Under the South African Schools Act governing bodies are expected to supplement state funds in order to improve education by other forms of fund-raising. In South Africa the success of school governance is focused on the form of structure and the ability of the School Governing Body to meet legislative prescriptions (Grant Lewis & Motala, 2004). School governing bodies perceive that their main responsibility is raising funds for schools (Hartzell, 2002). In contrast to this, the researcher's findings are that the School Governing Body is not actively involved in this respect. Karlsson (2002) proposes that the embedded apartheid legacy of inequality at schools influences the governing body's capacity to raise funds. Schools should budget for adequate and sustained funding for library development and resources. This funding may come from school fees, the norms and Standards allocation or fund-raising activities (KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education, 2003).

6.2.5 Effective implementation of LAD in relation to teacher training and support

Teacher training and support are discussed in the next section in relation to Research question 1d; "What preparation (if any) did they [i.e. teachers] receive for developing literacy competencies?" and Research question 3; "What recommendations for teacher training and support are suggested by the answers to the above questions?" Figure 6.9 outlines the four sub-themes which impact negatively on LAD. It illustrates the challenges experienced in teacher training and support, namely, teachers' personal literacy, the impact of teacher unions, the effects of poverty and HIV/AIDS, and inadequate teacher training. In South Africa the introduction of a new curriculum has created a demand for more highly skilled and knowledgeable teachers. However, apartheid left an inadequately trained teaching force, lacking the capacity to develop the learner's literacy to effective levels.



Figure 6.9 Four sub-themes which impact negatively on LAD in relation to teacher training and support

a. Teachers' personal literacy

It is evident that the teachers are blamed for the poor literacy performance of learners. In this context teachers are not suitably trained and are incompetent themselves. Therefore the reading demands escalate through the schooling system; the inability of teachers to learn from reading means that they cannot teach their learners in class. A Joel Primary Grade 5 teacher commented:

Many teachers in South African schools lack literacy skills themselves, and this to a certain extent is causing our literacy crisis. The DoE is well aware of the problems that teachers are employed without basic linguistic knowledge and skills, these teachers must be taken out of the school and given appropriate training or we are widening the gap in our literacy crises (Interview, 7).

This view is supported by the MEC for Education, Senzo Mchunu: there is an urgent need for an “intensive drive to train teachers because teachers are inappropriately qualified, under-qualified and unqualified” (Mbanjwa, 2009). Training should address the gap in literacy pedagogy in the classroom and literacy

acquisition skills. Teachers must be trained with the necessary skills to support learners to manage complexities in reading and writing.

Milo Primary Grade 4 teacher:

... problems are now exposed where we are finding that teachers were badly trained previously and also that in many black schools they teach mostly in the mother-tongue. The problem is that the teachers are not proficient and cannot apply the linguistic skills when it comes to teaching in English, they need these appropriate skills...some teachers battle to read and write simple word. Basically our learners are suffering the consequences of the teachers' inadequate skilling. (Interview, 4)

A similar view is expressed by Taylor and Vinejevoid:

Many teachers are first generation literates and therefore lacking in knowledge, the types and levels of literacy that would enable them to develop their students' literacy skills effectively (Taylor 2001). South Africa currently has large numbers of teachers who have not mastered basic academic skill nor the content of subjects and learning areas they are required to teach, general learning and teaching issues and processes applicable to all teachers, such as planning, assessment, mediation of learning and classroom management (Taylor & Vinejevoid, 1999).

This is echoed by a John Primary Grade 6 teacher:

A big problem for me is that in the rural schools just anybody is employed has a teacher. If a person has or has not matric they still fill the teaching posts because the urban teachers do not want to work in the rural area. One area from were we are having literacy problems is when the teacher does not have the appropriate knowledge and skills to teach. We have problems ourselves because we are poor in spelling in English, so it is difficult to teach if we do not know it ourselves. Do you see where the problem is stemming from teaching need skills our poor pedagogical skills are lacking but essential to teach. If we go way back as well we see some of the teachers where just pushed through the poor schooling system where the

problems emanated from inappropriate teaching. Eventually the learners are reaping these bad benefits. (Interview, 1)

This view is also supported by Naidoo (2009), that our learners are short-changed by incompetent teachers. It is also the responsibility of the teacher to deliver quality education by teaching the learners relevant literacy skills. Literacy needs of learners cannot be met by inadequately trained teachers with weak frameworks of knowledge. Taylor (2010) states that many South African teachers are first generation literates and therefore lack knowledge and types and levels of literacy which would enable them to develop their learners' skills effectively.

Naidoo (2009) comments: "literacy levels of teachers are frightening; pupils are short changed by incompetent teachers and the curriculum, i.e. poor matric results and literacy levels at school". The likely outcome of this situation is widening inequality across school contexts, the very antithesis of the declared aims of C2006. Privileged schools, with highly qualified teachers and strong frameworks of knowledge, will be better able to respond to the literacy needs of their learners (Taylor 2001; Fleisch 2007). However, for the majority of teachers and students in South African schools the reality is starkly different. Extreme poverty means that the majority of students come from either illiterate or semiliterate homes or with little or no access to empowering literacy resources such as books, newspapers or libraries.

Milo Primary Grade 5 teacher:

It is time that we need to get to the root of our literacy problems or else we will be heading for an illiterate society. There are many misconceptions about teachers' work in the class. Let me explain how schools are recruiting teachers are a major problem. They are filling post without adhering to the teachers' competence or qualification. Literacy teaching is a serious issue and teachers must be skill.... For teaching I class. (Interview, 6)

Serrao's (2009) concern is that teachers are badly trained for the curriculum. A study done in Cape Town's East Metropole Primary schools on teacher profiles and literacy practices in the Intermediate Phase revealed very low literacy levels among learners in South African schools, and concluded:

Based on rapid advances in what is known about how learners learn and how to teach effectively, core concepts and central pedagogies must be at the heart of primary education. Preparing teachers for a changing world recommends the creation of an informed teacher education curriculum with common elements that represents the state of the art standards for these professions. In preparing teachers they must include and address key foundational knowledge for teaching and discuss how to implement this in knowledge within the classroom. All new teachers must have a basic understanding of how learners learn and develops as they acquire and use literacy skills (Green & Evans, 2008; Ndlovu, 2010).

Teachers play a central role in the challenge of literacy development in schools, and information about their literacy practices and proficiencies may bring useful strategic insight in how to address the literacy crisis in education (Mati, Townsend, & Versveld, 2001). The poor literacy performances of learners as evidenced in the systemic evaluation at Grade 3 and 6 levels in Western Cape in recent years constitute a growing crisis, and have prompted calls for the declaration of a state of emergency in education.

b. Impact of teacher unions

This study reveals that the reasons for the negative rating on teachers' experience with their unions are that the unions have a more political focus than the teachers.

John Primary Grade 5 teacher:

.. our unions are a major problem, they are also creating many problems, the first one is that they are there for their own benefit for political gain, case in point our recent strike we listened to them and eventually we were hit with a hard blow, DoE docked large sums of money from our salary BUT they were paid in full. Also they are involved in shady deals, fraudulent where cases are know for purchasing of posts, bringing parents outside of the school so that their pals can get jobs. The

unions are not transparent in fact they have a very negative impact on the education system. I also think they control the government, and why are they given so much power... (Interview, 6)

Complaints in the Diko and Akojee (2009) study about the abuse of the system by union members were widespread. Arend's work (2008) shows that teachers recruited by these unions are teaching subjects for which they are not qualified and those who are qualified to teach these subjects (such as literacy, maths, or science) are not teaching them. When poor teachers are in circulation, they redistribute low quality teaching; hence quality is kept out of the schools. Recruiting teachers is fraught with politics and preferment. Union members reputedly fill positions via friends in the provincial office and even that of principal, when they are unqualified and do not match the school's need. Concerns about literacy acquisition have been echoed by teachers in South Africa, who are pointing a finger at the unions for the situation that literacy acquisition at primary education are deteriorating at a time when they need to be rapidly improving. "Principals use SADTU as an intimidating tool when their efficiency and management styles are challenged, unions look after their comrades' interest at interviews and are not interested in employing the best person for the job" (Naidoo, 2009). Schools suffer because the "power wielded by teacher unions facilitates the appointments" of teachers and officials "not according to their experience or credentials, but their political and personal relationship with Senior unionists" (Taylor, 2010b). "Unions are not playing along, they have been very supportive of bad teaching practices" (Serrao, 2010).

Milo Primary Grade 4 teacher:

...teacher unions are problematic and can be blamed for our poor literacy levels, because they give their incompetent friends and relatives teaching posts in which they cannot cope, our learners are suffering because of our union... they do have a more political focus than supporting us because they have more power and this

can be intimidating to us teachers, principals, and, more importantly the SGBs. We need their support in our developmental capacity's... (Interview, 4)

Joel Primary Grade 6 teacher:

...in South Africa teacher unions wield a lot of power and status, its time they are put in their place to handle labour issues only, they do not support educators, they are political and do thing for themselves. In order to keep abreast with contemporary education issues, we need to keep a close eye on media that give us the outputs. Unions especially SADTU can be demanding, damaging and very controlling. Government needs to take a stand and tell the unions where to get off... (Interview, 4)

Teachers tend to have a low level of intellectual content in their lessons (Taylor, 2010b) Naidoo (2009) states that unions need to be challenged because they continue to lay the blame on the previous regime for South Africa's education problems, matric results and performance in literacy. Jonathan Jansen in that same article stated: "SADTU repudiates accountability and uses teacher development as a façade for its teachers' lack of commitment and competence in the classroom."

c. Effects of poverty and HIV/AIDS

Evidence from this study reveals that poverty is another vital risk factor for both literacy failure and HIV/AIDS. In addition, the HIV/AIDS epidemic has reached catastrophic proportions affecting all aspects of life in South Africa including education.

Milo Primary Grade 5 teacher:

... we are confronted daily by so many challenges... HIV and poverty most times go hand in hand. Learners are either affected or infected by both. Our learners come from the nearby location, most of them live in dilapidated shacks. Economically they are in a bad state, their parents are unemployed and live in

drastic poverty. There is a large scale of substance abuse etc. Our school participates in the nutrition programme but this is not enough to eradicate poverty. We cannot teach children that have empty tummies; they cannot concentrate on learning when they are hungry. (Interview, 6)

The same view is expressed in the literature, that learners face social issues such as poverty and AIDS which have a large impact on schooling “50% of learners live in poverty and a hungry child cannot concentrate on learning” (Serrao, 2010).

John Primary Grade 5 teacher:

... we are a poor, rural community, so learners live in abject poverty, some parents are farmers cultivating vegetables and breeding cattle on a small scale. There are high levels of hunger and malnutrition in my area. For these learners the last thing on the mind is education. We have the nutrition program, learners rely heavily on the school for these meals, and they even save it for the people at home. Learners have responsibilities to their siblings and they save their food to take home to the sick. (Interview, 3)

South Africa has one of the largest income disparities in the world, with over 45% of the total population living below the poverty line. My response to eradicating poverty is that we should help our learners become literate, to enjoy reading, writing and books: this is a foundation for all future learning and development. When learners become literate and are able to make good use of educational opportunities, they are less likely to be unemployed and sink into poverty.

Participants' evidence reveals that the impact of HIV/AIDS is negative both to teacher and learners.

Joel Grade 4 teacher:

The education system has been beaten by the incurable, terminal disease HIV. It becomes everyone's responsibility to know about AIDS. But we still read in the

media how this disease and poverty is killing both teachers and learners. It is essential that we develop measures in order to address both AIDS and poverty. Unless we get this right ... [but] maybe our literacy problem will turn out okay. (Interview, 8)

Milo Primary Grade 6 teacher:

...it's devastating to see learners take care of adults that are affected with AIDS, child-headed homes. The HIV/AIDS problem also impacts on learners in the education system, they are unable to attend school because they are orphaned due to AIDS and are forced to become the heads of their household. (Interview, 5)

This view is supported by the EFA Country Report (2010), which shows that child-headed households are becoming more and more common as the disease spreads across the country. The effect of the HIV/AIDS pandemic has created a significant panic about our school, as the impact of HIV/AIDS is negative both to teacher and learners. Illnesses such as HIV/AIDS place constant pressure on staffing. Normal attrition rates are affected by teacher morbidity and mortality, among other things, but the HIV/AIDS pandemic has exacerbated these trends (Chisholm, 2008, Kruss, 2008). According to Chisholm (2008), 12.6% of educators were HIV positive. HIV prevalence was the highest in the 25-34 age groups among Africans.

John Primary Grade 6 teacher:

In our school there are many challenges when it come to HIV/AIDS, teachers require skills and knowledge and environment that must facilitate, collaborate and support our teaching and learning processes, HIV/AIDS has a devastating effect on the educational system in South Africa where it is creating havoc among both learners and teachers alike there are many AIDS orphans , learner with AIDS, learners are either affected or infected, they get absent to look after people at home, poverty and AIDS is bad. (Interview, 1)

Indeed South Africa is experiencing one of the most severe HIV/AIDS pandemics and the highest infection rates in the world. By the end of 2005 there were 6.5 million people living with HIV in South Africa, and almost 1,000 AIDS deaths occurring every day, according to UNAIDS estimates. South Africa has one of the highest HIV infection rates in the world and this is a mammoth problem for both the teachers and learners. The prevalence rate among educators in S.A. was recently reported to be 12.7%, which is slightly higher than the rest of the population (Education Training and Development Practices - Sector Education and Training Authority, 2010).

d. Inadequate teacher training

All nine teachers expressed their concern about the many changes made to the curriculum since 1994, and that their training and skills have not changed to suit the change of curriculum. A similar view is expressed by scholars who assert that there is a whole field of literature developing which deals with issues of teachers' professional identities, the hidden side of teachers' work, building a better teacher, and confronting the crisis in teacher training (Block, 2001; Chisholm, 2008; Chisholm *et al.*, 2005; Department of Education, 2005). Teachers are a key component of our education system and therefore it is imperative to support and capacitate them with the best training available. In the last two to three decades teachers' training and support has been plagued by problems locally and internationally (Karlsson, McPherson, & Pampallis, 2001; Lalleman, 1996; Leu, Kinzer, Coiro, & Cammack, 2004). These problems include the growing dissatisfaction of teachers about their working conditions, which are characterised by large classes, heavy workloads, low salaries and inadequate training.

John Primary Grade 5 teacher:

... our education and democracy has brought about so many changes that we are supposed to adapt to, such as our learners, policies, our context but yet our training has not changed, we are still teaching with the old training we received. Because of these changes we need development example in teaching

methodology, teaching techniques, subject content, learner environment and their cognitive capability'. Teacher's need skills, capacities, dispositions and the practices in which we become better skilled practitioners. (Interview, 3)

This view is supported by the report of the President's Education Initiative Research Project (2005), which concludes that the most critical challenge facing education in South Africa is the limited conceptual understanding many teachers have of the subjects they teach, and especially in literacy. Classroom practice still tends to be dominated by teacher talk with a low level of learner participation, lessons having a lack of structure and relatively few tasks requiring reading and writing (Department of Education, 2005). Naidoo (2009) argues that most teachers need urgent appropriate support and development to acquire the competences needed for developing literacy, as well as other competencies required in classroom practices. According to Soudien (2008), South Africa needs to rethink our teacher training programmes because they do not prepare teachers in the multilingual and multicultural environment nor the methodologies to make teacher education a rich and engaging experience. We need to develop strategies for teacher preparation which are grounded in a deep understanding of our context.

Milo Primary Grade 5 teacher:

...the norms and Standards for Educators shows that a big change in our status and spells out seven roles of the educator, we are not well prepared for these roles, yet the DoE expects us perform these roles. The Department of Education (2000) norms and Standards for educators outlines the seven roles for educators. These roles emphasize the important of specialist subjects or content knowledge, teaching skills, and the ability to think and reflect about how to use professional autonomy to improve teaching practices. (Interview, 5)

Joel Primary Grade 6 teacher:

... everyone assumes that most of us teachers already posses the seven role or professional values and commitment to improve the teaching and learning process

as well as reflexive competencies to account for our work. There are many challenges and these must be identified and addressed in order for us to perform in our literacy classes. (Interview, 4)

The data from this study is opening new lines of enquiry for literacy acquisition and development for training of teachers. Three basic conditions to sustain and improving literacy are: the nature of the curriculum, the quality and commitment of teachers, and the availability of suitable resources to support the process of teaching and learning (Hindle, 2009). Macdonald (2002) asserts that the majority of South African educators were poorly educated and poorly trained. Educators are well aware that they are ill-prepared to teach literacy. Teacher training and preparation of teachers need to change according to our context. There is no body of empirical work and theoretical engagement that speaks specifically to the Intermediate Phase with regards to literacy acquisition and development. This study shows that there are serious implications for what we do in our teacher preparation programmes.

Milo Primary Grade 4 teacher:

... Curriculum changes dictate that we are professional development but yet there has not been much in-service-training or professional development for us. (Interview, 4)

Effective teacher development programmes are crucial in helping with literacy acquisition and development. These programmes must address pedagogical updating, up skilling and they must be educationally uplifting. The reasons for our literacy crisis are not obvious if one fails to see the big picture. All efforts at improving our literacy problems can be considered as fighting the symptoms instead of fighting the cause, similar to prescribing pain-killers, decongestants, or anti-inflammation agents to fight the symptoms of pneumonia instead of antibiotics to cure the cause. The big picture is that South African schools are pumping out hundred of learners each year who are not functionally literate as shown in our

matic results year after year. It is obvious that the real need is to change teaching methods in such a way as to cure the root cause of illiteracy. These findings reveal and will feed into specialist knowledge on the current state of literacy acquisition and development in formal primary education into the area of teacher training so as to address the problems of lack of preparedness of teachers to deal with literacy acquisition (Green & Evans, 2008).

6.3 Conclusion

In this chapter the researcher presented her analysis of the data gathered from the Intermediate Phase teachers, based on the survey of 33 participants in three wards and interviews with nine participants at three schools. Figure 6.10 illustrates the complex spread of factors involved in LAD emerging from the survey and interviews. The analysis shows how five main factors impact on learners' performance in classroom practices with regards to literacy skills: the implementation of government literacy policy at classroom level, learners' experience in the classroom, teachers' experience at classroom level, social factors, and teacher training and support. The Intermediate Phase learners' performance in classroom practice could be seen to be affected by four factors, namely, reading competences, effects of learners' attitude on LAD, influence of parents and mother tongue education, and learners' academic ability. The teachers could be seen to struggle to deal with factors such as inadequate literacy personnel, excessive workload and overcrowded classes.

The social factors which negatively impact on LAD were found to be local social context, security for literacy resources, physical challenges, the perceived role of SGBs and budgeting. The local social context affects conditions by providing - or withholding - relevant resources for the learners who speak different home languages and live in informal settlements. At times other organisations and agencies may assist teachers who have an inadequate budget for these resources.

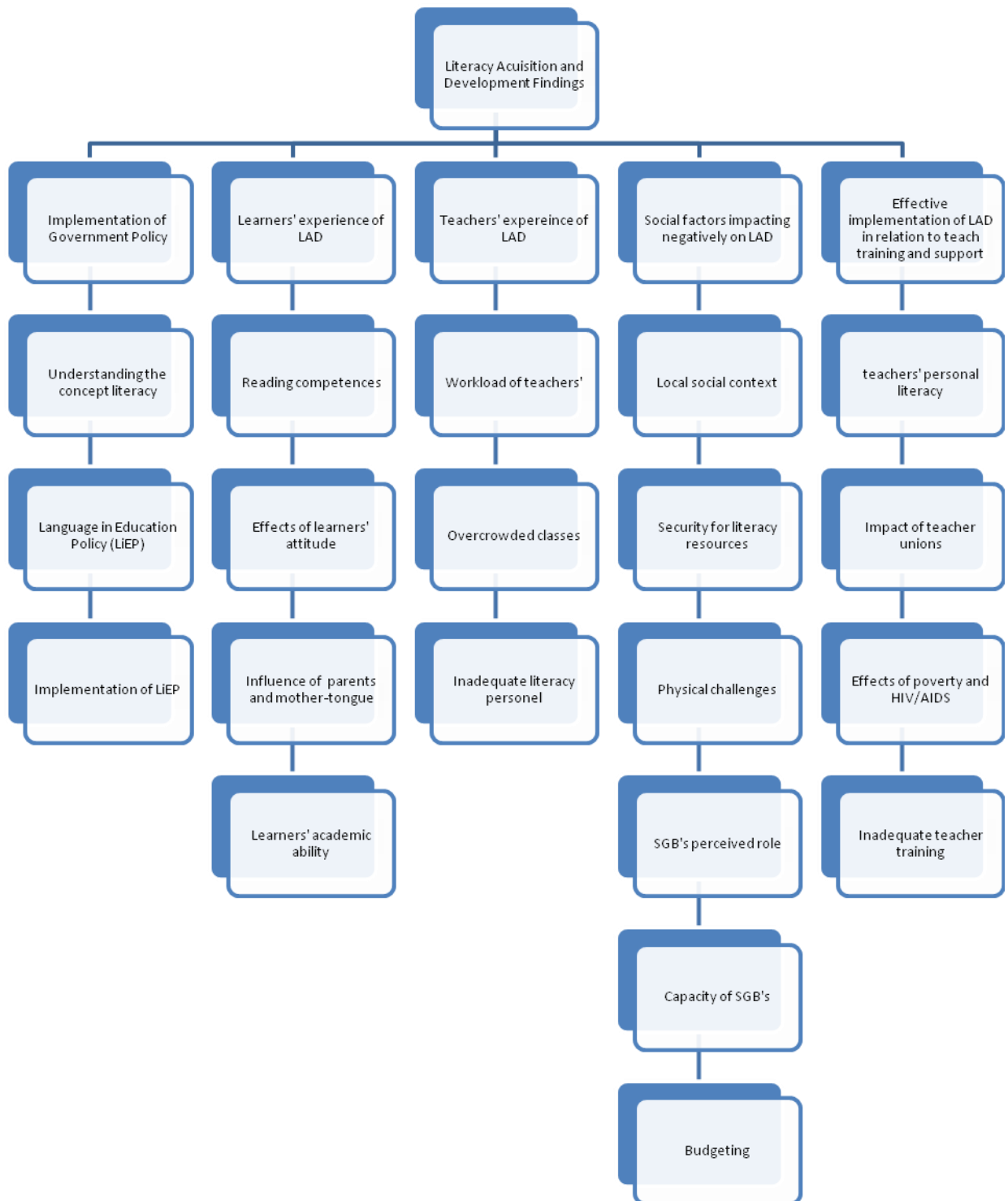


Figure 6.10 Overview of the factors which impact on LAD

The School Governing Body's performance was found to be affected by its incapacity. Teacher training and support can impact negatively in the following categories: teachers' personal literacy, impact of teacher unions, effects of poverty and HIV/AIDS and inadequate teacher training. Low attainment levels in literacy and numeracy are unacceptable because they reduce chances of success in further education. The ability to calculate, the ability to write and the ability to read with comprehension enhance opportunities of success when pursuing learning beyond the Intermediate Phase.

In summary, some of the clearly intertwined challenges we experience at the level of Intermediate Phase education include the problem of teacher quantity, quality and ability; lack of sufficient support for African language learners; large class sizes; lack of resources; lack of quality leadership in schools. These challenges are the shaky ground upon which we build education for some of our learners, especially those in rural and poor areas. This situation must change, but the challenges we face are multiple and complex. In the next chapter the implications of these findings are developed as conclusions and recommendations.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Literacy is a process in which the eye begins to replace the ear as a major source of information (Govender, 2007)

7.1 Introduction

Chapter Seven starts with an overview of the conclusions arrived at from an analysis of the quantitative and qualitative data. It then discusses key conclusions in more detail in relation to the main themes emerging in this study. It concludes with recommendations intended to address the perceived literacy crisis in Education in South Africa.

7.2 Overview of conclusions

In Table 7.1 an attempt is made to give an overview of the conclusions resulting from the analysis of the quantitative and quantitative data. It must be remembered, however, that, while the main themes were the same, the sub-themes in each case were slightly different (i.e. those in the quantitative data were based on the mainly closed questions in the questionnaire, while those in the qualitative data were based on open-ended questions in the interviews).

7.3 Key Conclusions

Four key conclusions stand out in this study as indicated in Figure 7.1 namely; implementation of LIEP, Reading, Inadequate teacher training and the incapacity of the School Governing Body (SGB). The first concerns the role of Language in Education Policy (LiEP). Its implementation at school level clearly is not working for various reasons, as stated in Chapter Six. This dysfunction impacts negatively on teachers and learners' performance at classroom level in the Intermediate Phase.

Table 7.1 Overview of findings

THEMES	INDICATORS IN QUANTITATIVE DATA	CONFIRMATION IN QUALITATIVE DATA
1. The implementation of Government literacy policy at classroom level	...suggest that minimum involvement of DoE in assisting to implement LiEP is leading to teachers not managing. Problems experienced are changes in curriculum practice in literacy; understanding and implementing literacy policy; accessibility of policy; lack of SMT monitoring LAD; policy not catering for learner diversity. This shows uneven implementation (see skews and bias), with very few schools (10%) actually implementing LiEP.	The skews/biases indicate the challenges of implementing LiEP: interviews confirm that guidelines for implementation are not clear, and that teachers have not been capacitated (i.e. by training) to implement LiEP. South Africa is a multilingual society having unique linguistic problems and there is a lack of experience and expertise in schools in developing and implementing their own policies; schools do not have the necessary support from the DoE.
2. Learners' experience in the classroom of LAD	... suggest that learners lack the pre-requisites for basic LAD competencies; teachers do not know how to teach learners to improve reading, and are not using group work; non implementation of LAD is hindering learners' academic levels; learners have difficulty in learning reading because of inadequate resources; varying ability levels of LAD are not catered for; race and gender is not accommodated; there is a lack of teacher skills in facilitating LAD in learners' MT (i.e. isiZulu); learners' negative attitude affects LAD.	Contextual factors can be seen to lead to these problems (as indicated in the skews/biases): Schools in rural communities have neither the background in home literacy to prepare students nor the resources or teacher training to deal with the problems. While learners' MT in under-resourced schools in mainly isiZulu, parents insist on English as MOI, which impacts negatively on both teacher and learner performance. The skews/biases in the quantitative data strengthen the qualitative data by indicating that the social context can lead to marked differences in teacher/learner experiences of LAD.
3. Teachers' experience of LAD at classroom level	...suggest no teachers were confident in implementing LAD; they experienced problems with LAD; were not comfortable in implementing LAD because of: inadequate training, lack of competence, and inadequate LAD skills. Learners' mother-tongue being in isiZulu hampered LAD, as well as teachers' ability to cater for disadvantaged learners; grouping learners per language was not an option (lack of teacher language skills).	Lack of confidence in implementing LAD was confirmed in the interviews for the same, and some additional, reasons (i.e. explaining the skews/biases): inadequate literacy personnel, excessive workload of teachers and overcrowded classes. Evidence gleaned from this study reveals that teachers have heavy administrative workloads which impact negatively on curriculum time. Other challenges are the low morale of teachers and inadequate salaries in terms of workload.

THEMES	INDICATORS IN QUANTITATIVE DATA	CONFIRMATION IN QUALITATIVE DATA
4. Social factors impacting negatively on the practice of LAD	...suggest that SGBs do not promote LAD; SGBs do not have the capacity to implement LAD; SGBs do not handle problems relating to LAD; SGBs do not allocate funds for LAD resources.	Social factors contribute negatively (explaining the skews/biases) to LAD: SBG performance does not match what is stated in the policy. The incapacity of SGBs in promoting LiEP is explained as their not understanding LiEP or their roles and responsibilities in promoting LAD; SGBs do not have the capacity (no time after work) nor do they budget for LiEP; some local social contexts have poor conditions (i.e. for LAD) and negative contributing factors such as cultural and language differences and low economic levels; teachers' work is impeded or slowed down because of the need to cater for the different learner languages; poverty in certain communities means that there is inadequate security and no library in 2 of the 3 schools, where the lack of finance hinders teachers from meeting the learners' needs (e.g. by providing books in different languages).
5. Effective implementation of LAD in relation to teacher training and support	...suggest inadequate teacher training and support: only 3% said they had qualified literacy educators; no specific training for effective implementation of LAD; no support for effective implementation of LAD; challenges with workload, unions, lack of teachers, personnel, library resources.	The trends shown in the quantitative data were confirmed in interviews, which indicated the challenges experienced in teacher training and support, namely, teachers' personal literacy, the impact of teacher unions, the effects of poverty and HIV/AIDS, and inadequate teacher training. The introduction of a new curriculum in South Africa has created a demand for more highly skilled and knowledgeable teachers.

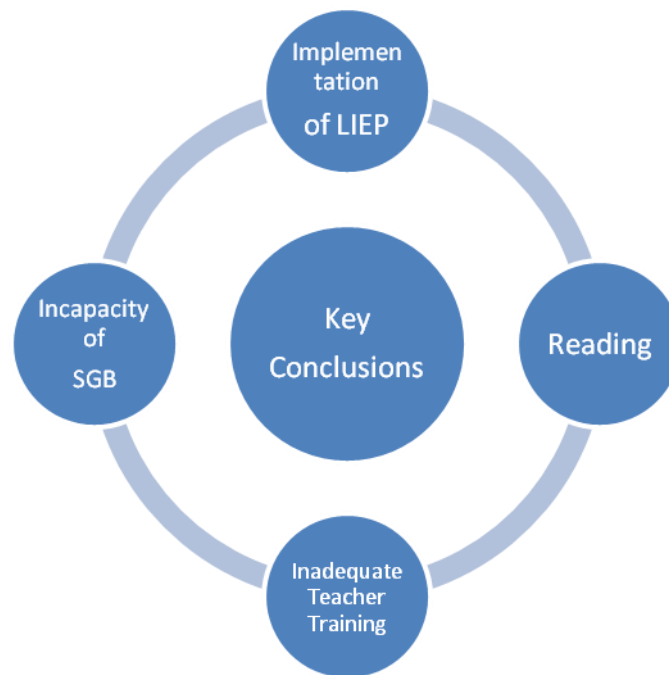


Figure 7.1 The four key conclusions

The second conclusion leads from the first because it contributes to the literacy crisis as a whole in South African schools in terms of lack of reading competences. Moreover, inadequate teacher training creates various challenges for both teachers and learners in a multicultural classroom. The last conclusion concerns the incapacity of School Governing Bodies (SGBs), which appear not to understand their roles and responsibilities when it comes to LiEP. This means that they do not function so as to develop quality education for all learners at the school (Republic of South Africa, 1996).

7.3.1 Language in Education Policy (LiEP)

LiEP can be seen not to work because various social mechanisms combine to hinder their working. In order for LiEP to function, mechanisms, structures and systems must be considered, and policies must be geared to work within the realities of the situation. Policies must be designed so that they address the real problems involved in LAD. We need to reformulate the LiEP so that it can address the interference of the complex layers illustrated in Figure 6.10.

Countrywide debates similar to those created by Curriculum 2005 in South Africa have happened in other countries where teachers believe that policies intended to reform education are simply thrown at them (Taylor, 2010b). Educators do recognise that changes in the country demand new educational policies, but what concerns them is the manner in which they have been effectively frozen out of policymaking issues. This raises a number of issues about policy processes in education. Should not teachers play a role in education policy processes? Teachers are expected to implement these policies but are seldom given the opportunity to explore them in relation to their own values and traditions. According to Taylor implementation of policies can not be achieved in a vacuum. Since policies are part of a social environment, they can be expected to be ignored, resisted, contested or re-articulated to suit local circumstances. Teachers and parents are at the receiving end of policymaking, and this causes frustration.

7.3.2 Reading

South Africa participated in the 2006 PIRLS Study, for Grade 4 and 5 learners where they performed poorly achieving the lowest score of all 45 participating education systems (Department of Basic Education, 2010). A growing body of research indicates a deepening crisis in our schooling system inextricably linked to the low levels of literacy being achieved by learners at all levels of the education system (Education Training and Development Practices - Sector Education and Training Authority, 2010; Serrao, 2010). The National Department of Education released the results of its Systemic Evaluations of the Foundation Phase (Grade 3) in 2003 and of Grade 6 in 2007. The evaluations found that the average score of Grade 3 learners in reading and writing was 39 %, while more than two-thirds of Grade 6 learners performed below required levels. The Western Cape Grade Six Learner Assessment Study (2004) found that only 35% of learners were performing at Grade 6 level. When these results were analysed according to the former department schools belonged to, it was found that in former DET schools only four children in a hundred were reading at grade levels, and a third of these children could not read at Grade Three levels.

Literacy acquisition is a foundational skill that should continue to develop throughout a learner's time at school because it is a tool for further learning. Reading and writing are rooted in conceptions of knowledge in a particular educational context with its meaning and practices (Street, 1995). Surveys of the retention of literacy skills and development (Grigg, Donahue & Dion, 2007; Pressley, 2004) indicate that such skills are best retained when they are used in "real" situations with "real" materials. Evaluations have shown that, despite some difficulties, the use of existing literacy practices as the basis of learning literacy and development can be made to work. However, current understandings of lifelong learning are challenging the view that autonomous lifelong learning can only start once a learner has completed the first stages of learning literacy. It is now clear that learning is not dependent on literacy.

Conclusions from this study concerning reading can be summed up in the following statements:

- Reading is crucial, and unless attention is paid to the unequivocal teaching of reading through all levels of schooling, learners will not learn to read effectively and schooling will continue to be a vehicle for widening inequality in our society rather than the opposite.
- The systemic barriers are the root of these problems that exist in the education system together with the ineffective teaching of reading in the schools which result in learners' consequent inability to independently learn from reading across the curriculum.
- The National Curriculum Statement (NCS) correctly places literacy development across the curriculum as core to the problems besetting South African education, there is an urgent need for a theoretically informed but practically grounded methodology which can be implemented across the curriculum and throughout all phases of schooling.

Reading is commonly viewed as a basic set of skills, widely adapted to all kinds of texts and reading situations. South Africa must take on the challenge of improving young children's reading skills, and not assume that, once basics of literacy are accomplished, learners would be well equipped for literacy-related

tasks later in life (Blair, 1999) . The idea that basic reading skills automatically evolve into more advanced reading skills, and that these basic skills are highly generalizable and adaptable, is partially correct: the basic perceptual and decoding skills which are connected with early literacy learning in the Foundation Phase (e.g. phonics, phonological awareness, and sight vocabulary) are entailed in virtually all reading tasks (Rayner & Pollatsek, 1994). The pyramid in Figure 2.1 above (see Chapter 2) illustrates the researcher's perspective on how the development of literacy acquisition progresses in South African schools, as follows.

The base of the pyramid represents the highly generalizable basic skills that include basic decoding skills, understanding of various print and literacy conventions (e.g. understanding that text must be meaningful, the primacy of print namely: illustration, directionality, concept of word), recognition of high-frequency words, and some basic fluency routines (e.g. responding appropriately to basic punctuation). Most learners master these kinds of basic reading skills and conventions during the primary grades, and even those slow to develop tend to master all of these skills before the Intermediate Phase. In the Intermediate Phase entails literacy skills common to many tasks, including generic comprehension strategies, common word meanings, and basic fluency. As learners go beyond these basic aspects of literacy, they begin to add more sophisticated routines and responses to their repertoires. In this phase various reading comprehension responses and strategies come into play. But the majority of South African learners are not gaining these intermediate reading tools, and are finding it difficult to read texts (Rayner & Pollatsek, 1994). In literacy development, progressing higher in the pyramid means learning more sophisticated, but less generalizable, skills and routines. Given the range of learner abilities and the difficulty of learning these more sophisticated routines, teachers are experiencing major problems in facilitating literacy acquisition (Shanahan, 2007). It must be remembered that literacy problems are tackled on the premise of the South African educational system, namely, that decoding skills only are required to be taught in the Foundation Phase (Grade 1 to 3) and that learners exiting this phase are able to decode adequately (Machet &

Pretorius, 2004). In the Intermediate Phase decoding skills are largely taken for granted, with very little attention given to further developing decoding skills recently acquired. It is also assumed that the ability to decode means the ability to comprehend. For these reasons, for many children literacy skills are sub-optimally developed (Morrell, 2004).

7.3.3 Inadequate teacher training

Research is needed in a range of areas relating to teachers' initial and on-going training needs. This will involve research into the areas of articulation between teachers' previous education, their higher education and the schools in which they work. It is important to consider the changing socio-political climate and the impact this has on notions of education and pedagogy. This requires us to challenge the assumptions teacher educators make about how the professional and academic needs of teachers integrate. This may involve, for example, consideration of school-based practice, creative pedagogies, in-service professional training, continuing academic training, and development of subject knowledge for teaching. We need to research how such practices relate to changing contexts of education at the beginning of the new century, and what impact these changes have had and/or need to have on developing innovative teacher education practices. Clearly initial teacher education and continuing professional development programmes should not become slaves to political demand, but should reflect the pedagogical and professional needs of teachers, encouraging them to adopt critically reflexive stances towards their classroom practices and their development as pedagogues. It being understood that there are necessary and sometimes significant differences between the two fields of higher education and schools, what practices, pedagogies and structures might enable or constrain providers of initial and on-going teacher education? Teachers' learning occurs at various levels in diverse fields and contexts. How do we understand this diversity and complexity? What are the implications for teaching and learning in teacher education? How far should teacher education be academically and how far professionally focused? How "workplace-ready" are our graduates? How do teacher educators work with trainees' previous academic experiences and the subject knowledge they have developed through

prior academic studies? How do they manage the acculturation of trainees into the academic discipline of Education? How do they empower trainees as they make the transition from academia into the environment of school? How do they enable trainees to come to terms with these related but often conflicting paradigms and their related modes?

It is hoped that this research will make a contribution towards addressing the research gaps that we have identified in the field, how teachers work with learners at the beginning of and throughout their careers, and how this work is developing to reflect changing contexts of education nationally and internationally. Research that will theorise school-based and academic practices within integrated programmes of teachers' learning and professional development might include the following: researching the differences between academic and professional knowledge production systems, studying academic and workplace experiences, evaluating developing educational policies, practices and partnerships, and tracing their impact on teacher education (Collier, 1998). South Africa must focus in future on expanding teacher numbers, thereby reducing class sizes. South Africa's major priority should be to ensure that teacher salaries and conditions of work do not deteriorate and, more importantly teachers must be appointed to positions that they are trained and needed for. Chisholm (2008) refers to the quantity of ongoing research and a "raft" of policies to ensure greater equity in teacher provision and quality to the teaching corps, but comments that the system remains crippled by apparent teacher shortages and poor educational outcomes.

There are many challenges to solve, efficiently and immediately, with regards to literacy teaching. The literacy strategy for schools is embedded in the Department of Education's National Curriculum Statement (NCS), which support a communicative and whole-language approach. It is based on the assumption that all learners can and will be able to learn and read naturally. It can be argued, however that an unnatural situation exists in SA and that this would require much more structured literacy development approaches. These

should also be imbedded in appropriate policy positions and the incumbent implementation strategies.

7.3.4 Incapacity of School Governing Body (SGB)

It is considered that one of this study's contributions to addressing the literacy crisis is its focus on the Intermediate Phase literacy acquisition where the SGB can impact on it. The power and responsibility for putting The South African Schools Act (1996) into practice has been devolved to SGBs, and pertains to governance and parental involvement. This policy requires SGBs to announce the school LiEP and state how they will promote multilingualism through a variety of measures. School governing bodies (SGBs), teachers and learners appear not to be coping with literacy acquisition and development because it is complex. Certain SGBs also appear unwilling to go along with government policies because they do not understand them (Skinner, 2003). According to MEC of Education Senzo Mchunu: "we also encourage the training of the SGB to better understand their roles and functions which will allow them to function maximally" (Mbanjwa, 2009).

While this study cannot generalise as what is happening at public schools in the Pinetown Circuit and elsewhere in South Africa, is it very likely that similar literacy problems may exist in many other schools. The positive contribution of my study is its findings that the SGB is useful for giving effect to Section 20 (1)(a), obtaining funding. However, the funding collected tends to be used for sporting equipment and facilities rather than literacy resources. Intermediate Phase teachers who can play a pivotal role in literacy acquisition and development cannot therefore use the funding to promote LAD. The SGB should go further to act as a vehicle for to promote literacy effectively within the school level. This study shows, however, that the SGBs are not fully realising this role. My contention is that to do that they need clear guidelines on how to relate to the functions involved.

7.4 Recommendations

Literacy practices are intricately related to many factors such as inadequate training and resources, teachers' work demands, socio-economic background,

local social content, HIV/AIDS, and many more factors which complicate our educational agenda. It is within this context that literacy acquisition and development have attracted the attention of researchers, teachers and parents, not only because of what has been termed the “literacy crisis”, but also because literacy acquisition and development determine the learners’ future success in reading and writing (Ludwig & Herschell, 1998). This depends on the calibre of the principal, teachers and their dedication to the tasks; support of parents and the School Governing Body (Terblanche, 2009). These are ingredients for quality education.

It is recommended that teachers should:

- Recognise that reading in conjunction with play is the fundamental vehicle through which children learn and construct their understanding of the world around them
- Know when children can figure out new ideas and concepts on their own and when it is important things to them step-by-step.
- Encourage children to participate in classroom activities and to honour classroom rules.
- Listen to what children say and expand upon their language, building their vocabulary and knowledge, by keeping anecdotal notes.
- Know when to teach directly, when to provide time for exploration and discovery, when to practice and when to encourage creativity.
- Plan activities that have a purpose and that challenge children.
- Know how to help children learn to work together and to resolve their conflicts.
- Encourage children to respect each other’s time and personal belongings.
- Provide many opportunities for conversations between and among children with adults.
- Arrange the classroom in a way that enhances their work with children and how the children spell.
- Monitor and evaluate children’s progress as well as communicate effectively with parents.

- Employ developmentally appropriate practices that focus on the development of the whole child.

The new curriculum demands more highly skilled and knowledgeable teachers. In South Africa there is a demand for Intermediate Phase Literacy teachers especially in the mother-tongue. Responsibility for the “literacy crisis” is a catastrophe in the Intermediate Phase as well as in our education system we need the initiative to generate workable solutions that must be taken by the DoE. Elmore (2001) warns that: Teacher development should rather be driven by the needs of schools and of the broader system for improved learners’ learning and achievement. This improvement is not possible through the commitment of teachers alone. It requires high quality interventions by outside experts who could identify teacher, problems, assist, mentor and coach them as well as build capacity to sustain the improvement of their knowledge and competencies. The challenge is to win over teachers with high quality support to the idea of continuous professional development that would result in the improvement of learners’ learning.

If we get literacy teaching and learning right in the primary schools, we will get:

- Learning right throughout the system
- Improved high success rates and quality of learning outcomes
- Decreased dropouts
- A more effective education system
- An increase in the quality of school leavers
- An effective reading strategy.
- The greatest service for the people of our country.

According to Macdonald (2002), Taylor (2001) and Moore and Hart (2007), the problem with the initial introduction of the Outcomes Based Education (OBE) curriculum (C2005) was that the overt teaching of literacy was not foregrounded (Taylor & Vinejevoid, 1999). The National Curriculum Statement (NCS) has addressed this problem in terms of curriculum policy intent, but the issue of implementation to realise these aims remains. It is imperative that

theoretically and practically grounded methods which focus on reading as primary are used across the curriculum and through the different phases of the school system if this problem is to be effectively addressed. Curriculum innovation and development aimed at the content subjects will remain token and largely wasted efforts unless learners are able to read and, more importantly, independently learn from reading in the different learning areas (Rose, 2006).

A reading programme to intervene effectively in this situation must be based on:

- reading as the primary skill, without which curriculum development across learning areas will mean little, and without which students will not be able to write effectively;
- a sound understanding of the reading process and on a theoretically and practically grounded methodology which supports learners through that process;
- enabling those learners who have inadequate reading levels to develop their reading to appropriate levels at all levels of the education system, from foundation phase to secondary school,;
- enabling learners to read and write effectively in all learning areas across the curriculum.

7.5 Conclusion

The current literacy rate in South Africa is estimated at 93% (UNESCO, 2006). Although comprehensive policy and legislative frameworks related to general schooling, including literacy education, such as the South African Schools Act (SASA), Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS), and the Language in Education Policy (LiEP) are in place, a specific focus on literacy i.e. reading and writing skills are still lacking. Reading is not just for school, it is for life. Reading, in all its variety, is vital to our becoming better informed; have a better understanding of ourselves and others; and to our development as thoughtful, constructive contributors to a democratic and cohesive society. Leading world nations pride themselves on their promotion of reading. They see a high level of literacy as a major source of their competitiveness and social maturity. The

absence of a widespread culture of reading in South Africa acts as an effective barrier to our development, reconstruction, and international competitiveness. A number of challenges continue to bedevil literacy acquisition and development, and these are not limited to the problems discussed in this thesis.

APPENDIX A



ETHICS STATEMENT: Please complete and sign the attached Ethics Questionnaire.

All students who intend to complete research projects under the auspices of Durban University of Technology are required to complete this form. This is an abridged version of DUT's ethics questionnaire, for students conducting research in the Faculty of Arts and Design.

Use the Durban University of Technology's Research Ethics Policy and Guidelines to ensure that ethical issues have been identified and addressed in the most appropriate manner, before finalizing and submitting your research proposal.

Please indicate [by an X as appropriate] which of the following ethical issues could impact on your research. Please type the motivations/further explanations where required in the cell headed COMMENTS. Copying and pasting the appropriate sections from your proposal may not suffice - please ensure that your justification/comments are addressed fully, as issues that inadequately answered will be returned to the student for further comment.

No	Question		
1.	<p>DECEPTION</p> <p>Is deception of any kind to be used? If so provide a motivation for acceptability.</p> <p>Comment:</p>	No	X
		Yes	
2.	<p>CONFIDENTIALITY</p> <p>Does the data collection process involve access to confidential personal/organizational data (including access to data for purposes other than this particular research project) without prior consent of the subjects?</p> <p>Comment:</p>	No	X
		Yes	
3.	<p>Will the data be collected and disseminated in a manner that will ensure confidentiality of the data and the identity of the participants? Please explain</p> <p>Comment: Personal data are not sought, but may arise incidentally.</p>	No	
		Yes	X
		n/a	
4.	<p>Will the data obtained be stored and ultimately disposed of in a manner that will ensure the confidentiality of the participants? If "no" please explain. If "yes" how long will the confidential data be retained after the study (and by whom) and how will it be disposed of at the end of the period?</p>	No	
		Yes	X
		N/a	

	Comment: Data will be stored in a locked steel cupboard and destroyed two years after completion of the research.		
5.	Will the research involve access to data banks that are subject to privacy legislation? If yes, specify and explain. Comment:	No Yes	X
6.	RECRUITMENT Does respondent recruitment involve any direct personal approach from the researchers to the potential subjects? Refer to the sampling plan in your proposal and copy the relevant sections here. Comment: Sampling plan: “The quantitative aspect of the methodology will involve a survey of a school ward to establish an overview of classroom literacy practices.” “The qualitative approach will involve in-depth case-studies...Purposive sampling will be used in selecting the schools for the case studies, namely, urban, semi-urban and deep rural, so as to obtain a representative sample...” School staff and/or pupils involved in the surveys or case studies will be approached through the correct official channels (i.e. relevant DoE authorities and school Principals).	No Yes	 X
7.	Are participants linked to the researcher in a particular relationship i.e. employees, colleagues, family, students? If yes specify how. Comment: The researcher is a DoE Trainer, and thus is involved in running training courses for some (but not all) staff of the schools concerned.	No Yes	 X
8.	If yes to 7, is there any pressure from researchers or others that might influence the potential subjects to enrol? Elaborate. Comment: The training relationship is a facilitative one and not a line function position with power over staff or a teaching position with power to influence the learners' academic results.	No Yes	X
9.	Does recruitment involve the circulation/publication of an advertisement, circular, letter etc? Specify. Comment: Only letters of consent will be used, not letters circulated, advertisements, or other circulations/publications.	Yes No	 X
10	Will subjects receive any financial or other benefits as a result of participation? If yes, explain the nature of the reward, and safeguards. Comment:	Yes No	 X
11	Is the research targeting any particular ethnic or community group? If yes, motivate why it is necessary/acceptable. If you have not consulted a representative of this group, give a reason. In addition explain any consultative processes, identifying participants. Should consultation not take place, give a motivation. Comment:	Yes No	 X
12	Does the research fulfil the criteria for informed consent? [See guidelines]. If yes, no further answer is needed. If no, please specify how and why. Comment:	Yes No	X

13	Does consent need to be obtained from special and vulnerable groups (see guidelines). If yes, describe the nature of the group and the procedures used to obtain permission. Comment:	Yes	
		No	X
14	Will a Subject Information Letter be provided and written consent be obtained? If no, explain. If yes, attach copies to proposal. In the case of subjects who are not familiar with English (e.g. it is a second language), explain what arrangements will be made to ensure comprehension of the Subject Information Letter, Informed Consent Form and other questionnaires/documents. Comment: Information about the project is included on the letter of consent (in English and isiZulu). Questionnaires and surveys will be available in English and isiZulu.	Yes	X
		No	
15	Will results of the study be made available to those interested? If no, explain why. If yes, explain how. Comment: Main conclusions and application of the research will be disseminated through the official DoE channels.	Yes	X
		No	
16	RISKS TO SUBJECTS Will participants be asked to perform any acts or make statements, which might be expected to cause discomfort, compromise them, diminish self-esteem or cause them to experience embarrassment or regret? If yes, explain. Comment:	Yes	
		No	X
17	Might any aspect of your study reasonably be expected to place the participant at risk of criminal or civil liability? If yes, explain. Comment:	Yes	
		No	X
18	Might any aspect of your study reasonably be expected to place the participant at risk of damage to their financial standing or social standing or employability? If yes, explain. Comment:	Yes	
		No	X
19	Does the research involve any questions, stimuli, tasks, investigations or procedures which may be experienced by participants as stressful, anxiety producing, noxious, aversive or unpleasant during or after the research procedures? If yes, explain. Comment:	Yes	
		No	X
20	BENEFITS Is this research expected to benefit the subjects directly or indirectly? Explain any such benefits. Reports on the findings and conclusions will be communicated to various Education and Teacher Training bodies; Seminars, workshops and further training based on the findings and conclusions will possibly benefit educators.	Yes	X
		No	
21	Does the researcher expect to obtain any direct or indirect financial or other benefits from conducting the research? If yes, explain. Comment:	Yes	
		No	X

22	SPONSORS: INTERESTS AND INDEMNITY Will this research be undertaken on the behalf of or at the request of a company, or other commercial entity or any other sponsor? If yes, identify the entity. Comment:	Yes	
		No	X
23	If yes to 22, will that entity undertake in writing to abide by Durban University of Technology's Research Committees Research Ethics Policy and Guidelines? If yes, do not explain further. If no, explain Comment: n/a	Yes	
		No	
24	If yes to 23, will that entity undertake in writing to indemnify the institution and the researchers? If yes, do not explain further. If no, explain. Comment: n/a	Yes	
		No	
25	Does the researcher have indemnity cover relating to research activities? If yes, specify. If no, explain why not. Comment: No, the researcher is covered by the staff indemnity provisions of the DoE, as the research does not involve risk.	Yes	
		No	X
26	Does the researcher have any affiliation with, or financial involvement in, any organization or entity with direct or indirect interests in the subject matter or materials of this research? If yes, specify Comment: The researcher is in the employ of the DoE. As with any educational body, there would very likely be congruence of intention between researcher and employer to find ways of improving teaching and learning in the area of literacy acquisition and development, so that this relationship is not considered to compromise the findings or results in any way.	Yes	X
		No	

The undersigned declares that the above questions have been answered truthfully and accurately

STUDENT NAME: Rookamani (Wendy) Govender

SIGNATURE: 

DATE: 5 JANUARY 2009

APPENDIX B

LETTER OF CONSENT



Dear Participant

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this research study entitled *A critical realist approach to literacy acquisition and development, with specific application to teacher training and support in primary education in KwaZulu-Natal*.

This study will investigate how literacy is acquired and developed by learners at primary school level. It is hoped that the results will suggest possible solutions to any problems identified at primary schools, and will contribute to the body of knowledge informing teacher training.

The researcher undertakes to assure you of the following:

- To maintain your confidentiality;
- To protect your rights and welfare, i.e. to ensure that no harm comes to you as a result of this research;
- No manipulation or withholding of information is involved in this study;
- To present information and transcripts used in this research in such a way as to maintain the participant's dignity and if in doubt to first consult you;
- The participant is free to withdraw from this research process at any time whatsoever if the need should so arise.

It is hoped that education at large will benefit from the insights into literacy acquisition and development arising from this research. I acknowledge your sacrifice in volunteering to add to the body of academic knowledge and your perseverance in carrying out the research task to its completion.

Yours sincerely

R Govender
DTech student

Participant's signature of agreement _____ Date: _____

PLEASE PRINT NAME: _____

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR GRADE 4-5-6

LiEP - Language in Education Policy

LAC - Learning Area Committee

LLC - Literacy language and Communication

DoE - Department of Education

SMT - Senior Management Team

1. HOW ARE GOVERNMENT LITERACY POLICIES IMPLEMENTED IN PRACTICE (I.E. AT CLASSROOM LEVEL)?

- 1.1 What is your take on the whole issue of literacy acquisition?
- 1.2 What is your understanding of the government literacy policies?
- 1.3 Does your school have a literacy policy if yes who formulated it?
- 1.4 Did changes have to be made to the existing curriculum practice at school to accommodate the literacy policies? If yes, what were these changes?
- 1.5 Are there any other literacy policies in place prior to the DoE's initiative? If yes, what are they?
- 1.6 How the DoE was involved in providing your school with the necessary legislation on Literacy Acquisition and Development (LAD)?
- 1.7 How were the above policies implemented in your school?
- 1.8 How these policies were made accessible to all the educators?
- 1.9 How was the formation of the LACs to promote LAD?
- 1.10 How did the LACs workshop the LAD's to the LLC?
- 1.11 How do you understand the above policy (clearly understood) was for the LAC?
- 1.12 Apart from the LACs, would you think the clustering schools for support and development would be beneficial why and how?
- 1.13 Do you enunciate the LAD as done by the DoE is implemented by you?
- 1.14 How, if at all, did the SMT monitor the implementation of LAD?
- 1.15 In order for a successful programme to be effective for Grade 4 -6, what intervention should have already be done in foundation phase/grade?
- 1.16 How, if at all, does the literacy policy cater for learners with diverse literacy needs?
- 1.17 How, if at all, was the implementation of LAD evaluated and reviewed by both the LAC and SMT?

2. HOW DO LEARNERS EXPERIENCE THE ACQUISITION AND DEVELOPMENT OF LITERACY IN THE CLASSROOM?

- 2.1 What is the pre-requisite for the acquisition and development of basic literacy competencies?
- 2.2 How would you rate learners' LAD in your class? On a scale, 1-10, Substantiate your rating in question 2.2.
- 2.3 What would you suggest as ways and methods of improving learners' success in literacy competency?

- 2.4 How did the implementation of LAD enhance/hinder the levels of learners?
- 2.5 What are some of any difficulties, challenges experienced during the implementation of LAD by learners?
- 2.6 How does your school consider Inclusive Education (i.e. catering for varying ability levels)?
- 2.7 How, if at all, do you organise learners into groups to accommodate race/gender representivity?
- 2.8 How are learners given the opportunity to express their views during the implementation of LAD?
- 2.9 How, if at all, do you encourage/praise learners when there is evidence in improvement/development when implementing LAD?
- 2.10 How, if at all, do you vary your methodology if the application for LAD is not working?
- 2.11 What (if any) are some of the challenges in teaching LAD?

3. HOW DO TEACHERS EXPERIENCE DEVELOPING LITERACY COMPETENCES IN THE CLASSROOM?

- 3.1 Do you think educators in your school are confident in implementing LAD? If yes, why?
- 3.2 If at all, how do educators [you?] articulate the problems they experience in their classroom with regards to LAD?
- 3.3 How do you view the LAD policy, and, in your opinion, is it developmental for learners?
- 3.4 Do you feel comfortable in implementing LAD? How and why?
- 3.5 In your opinion, is the timing appropriate, and why/why not for the transition for learners to a first language (e.g. English)?
- 3.6 In your opinion, are you adequately trained to implement LAD skills? Why/why not?
- 3.7 In your opinion, how does the learners' mother tongue contribute to or hamper LAD skills?
- 3.8 How do you handle the situation if learners appear to be are grouping ethnically in the class and are using their mother tongue predominantly to communicate?
- 3.9 In your opinion, how does 3.8 impact on [or affect] the success of implementing LAD?
- 3.10 How would you cater for disadvantage learners to achieve greater success in LAD?
- 3.11 How, if at all, should learners be grouped/categorised per language ability for successful LAD?

4. EXPLAIN THE ROLE OF THE SGBs AND COMMUNITY IN FACILITATING OR PROMOTING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF LAD?

- 4.1 What role does the SGBs and the community play in facilitating or promoting the implementation of LAD?
- 4.2 How did the SMT unpack the government legislation to the SGB?
- 4.3 How was the implementation of LAD cascaded to the SGBS?
- 4.4 How did the DoE accommodate the SGB for work shopping them about LAD?
- 4.5 How are the SGBS interest/expertise utilised in their involvement with LAD?
- 4.6 How often the SGB and SMT meet to discuss the content of LAD?
- 4.7 How are finances allocated by SGB for the acquisition of resources to implement LAD?

- 4.8 How do these resources assist in implementing LAD?
- 4.9 How does the SGB monitor LAD?
- 4.10 How does the SGB handle problem with LAD encountered in the classroom?

5. WHAT TEACHER TRAINING AND SUPPORT IS REQUIRED FOR THE EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF LITERACY ACQUISITION AND DEVELOPMENT?

- 5.1 Does your school have qualified literacy educators/are you a qualified literacy educator?
- 5.2 What training is required for the effective implementation of LAD?
- 5.3 What support is required for the effective implementation of LAD?
- 5.4 Who, if anyone, assists in providing the support and training?
- 5.5 What preparation (if any) did educators receive for developing literacy competencies?
- 5.6 Which institution and year did you received your formal literacy training?
- 5.7 Is this training adequate to enable you to facilitate the learning and teaching of literacy successfully? Why/why not?
- 5.8 Do you want to discuss any challenges you experience in the classroom?
- 5.9 Would you like to revise or change any of your responses?
- 5.10 Have these questions brought up any issues you did not consider before?
- 5.11 Which ones/why? How do you now think about them?
- 5.12 Are there any other important (i.e. to you) issues which were not raised?
- 5.13 What were they? Why are they important to you?
- 5.14 Are there any questions you would like to ask/comments you would like to make?

APPENDIX D

DATE:2009

SURVEY

A realist approach into literacy and development, with specific application to teacher training and support in primary education in KwaZulu-Natal

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR GRADE 4-5 AND 6 EDUCATORS

BACKGROUND

The purpose of this questionnaire is to get a sense of how literacy is acquired by both learners and teachers at primary school level. Additionally, what are the challenges and demands that are made on you as teachers as well as your school in relation to teacher training and support?

The information gathered through this survey will suggest possible solution to problems at primary school and will contribute to building academic knowledge nationally and internationally as well as assist Higher Education Institutions with regard to training.

Information provided by you as participants will be strictly confidential and will be used for research purposes only. Broad trends in report writing will be made and no specific details relating to you and your school will be made unless permission for such inclusion is obtained from you. You have the right not to participate in this survey and you may also withdraw from participation at any time during this research process.

Having understood the purpose of this survey and your rights in participation, kindly complete the following questions in **Section A, B, C, D, E and F**.

LAD - Literacy Acquisition and Development
LAC - Learning Area Committee
LLC - Literacy language and Communication
DoE - Department of Education
SMT - Senior Management Team

SECTION A

NO	QUESTION	YES	NO
1	HOW ARE GOVERNMENT LITERACY POLICIES IMPLEMENTED IN PRACTICE (I.E. AT CLASSROOM LEVEL)?		
1.1	Do you understand the government literacy policies?		
1.2	Does your school have a literacy policy?		
1.3	Are there changes to the existing curriculum practice at school to accommodate the literacy policies?		
1.4	Are there any other literacy polices in place prior to the DoE's initiative?		
1.5	Was the DoE was involved in providing your school with the necessary legislation on Literacy Acquisition and Development (LAD)?		
1.6	Were the above policies implemented in your school?		
1.7	Were these policies made accessible to all the educators?		
1.8	Did the school form the LAC's to promote LAD?		
1.9	Did the LAC's workshop the LAD's to the LLC?		
1.10	Do you understand the above policy (clearly understood) was for the LAC?		
1.11	Do you think the clustering schools for support and development would be beneficial to your school?		
1.12	Do you enunciate the LAD as done by the DoE is implemented by you?		
1.13	Did the SMT monitor the implementation of LAD?		
1.14	Is there a successful intervention programme for Grade 4 6, which should have already, be done in foundation phase/grade?		
1.15	Does the literacy policy cater for learners with diverse literacy needs?		
1.16	Was the implementation of LAD evaluated and reviewed by both the LAC and SMT?		
SECTION B			
2	HOW DO LEARNERS EXPERIENCE THE ACQUISITION AND DEVELOPMENT OF LITERACY IN THE CLASSROOM?		
2.1	Is there a pre-requisite for the acquisition and development of basic literacy competencies?		
2.2	Are there ways and methods of improving learners' success in literacy competency? Explain		
2.3	Did the implementation of LAD enhance the levels of learners?		
2.4	Did the implementation of LAD hinder the levels of learners?		
2.5	Were there any difficulties, challenges experienced during the implementation of LAD by learners? Explain:		
2.6	Did your school consider Inclusive Education (i.e. catering for varying ability levels)?		

2.7	Did you organise learners into groups to accommodate race/gender representivity?		
2.8	Were learners given the opportunity to express their views during the implementation of LAD?		
2.9	Did you encourage/praise learners when there is evidence in improvement/development when implementing LAD?		
2.10	Did you, if at all, vary your methodology if the application for LAD was not working?		
2.11	Are there challenges (if any) in teaching LAD? Explain:		
	SECTION C		
3.	HOW DO TEACHERS EXPERIENCE DEVELOPING LITERACY COMPETENCES IN THE CLASSROOM?		
3.1	Do you think educators in your school are confident in implementing LAD?		
3.2	If at all, do you articulate the problems you experience in your classroom with regards to LAD?		
3.3	Do you view the LAD policy, and, in your opinion, is it developmental for learners?		
3.4	Do you feel comfortable in implementing LAD? How and why?		
3.5	In your opinion, is the timing appropriate and why/why not for the transition for learners to a first language (e.g. English)?		
3.6	In your opinion, are you adequately trained to implement LAD skills? Why/why not?		
3.7	In your opinion, does the learner's mother tongue contribute to or hamper LAD skills?		
3.8	Do you handle the situation if learners appear to be are grouping ethnically in the class and are using their mother tongue predominantly to communicate?		

3.9	In your opinion, how does 3.8 impact on [or affect] the success of implementing LAD?		
3.10	Do you cater for disadvantage learners to achieve greater success in LAD?		
3.11	Do you, if at all, should learners be grouped/categorised per language ability for successful LAD?		
	SECTION D		
4.	EXPLAIN THE ROLE OF THE SGBs AND COMMUNITY IN FACILITATING OR PROMOTING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF LAD?		
4.1	Do the SGBs and the community play in facilitating or promoting the implementation of LAD?		
4.2	Did the SMT unpack the government legislation to the SGB?		
4.3	Was the implementation of LAD cascaded to the SGBs?		
4.4	Did the DoE accommodate the SGB for work shopping them about LAD?		
4.5	Are the SGBs interest/expertise utilised in their involvement with LAD?		
4.6	Do the SGB and SMT meet to discuss the content of LAD?		
4.7	Are finances allocated by SGB for the acquisition of resources to implement LAD?		
4.8	Do these resources assist in implementing LAD?		
4.9	Does the SGB monitor LAD?		
4.10	Does the SGB handle problem with LAD encountered in the classroom?		
	SECTION E		
5.	WHAT TEACHER TRAINING AND SUPPORT IS REQUIRED FOR THE EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF LITERACY ACQUISITION AND DEVELOPMENT?		
5.1	Does your school have qualified literacy educators/are you a qualified literacy educator?		
5.2	Is specific training required for the effective implementation of LAD?		
5.3	Is support required for the effective implementation of LAD?		
5.4	Who, if anyone, assists in providing the support and training?		
5.5	What preparation (if any) did educators receive for developing literacy competencies?		
5.6	Which institution and year did you received your formal literacy training?		
5.7	Is this training adequate to enable you to facilitate the learning and teaching of literacy successfully? Why/why not?		

SECTION F

6.1 Subject/Learning Area Specialisation.....

6.2 Gender Male/Female

6.3 Highest Teaching Qualification: Full Name:.....

Degree/Diploma/Certificate.....

6.4 Total number of years teaching:.....

6.5 What are your current educator training
.....

.....

6.6 Other:.....

.....

.....

It is hoped that education at large will benefit from your insights into academic composing arising from this research. I acknowledge your sacrifice in volunteering to add to the body of academic knowledge and your perseverance in carry out this survey.

**R. GOVENDER
D. TECH STUDENT**

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